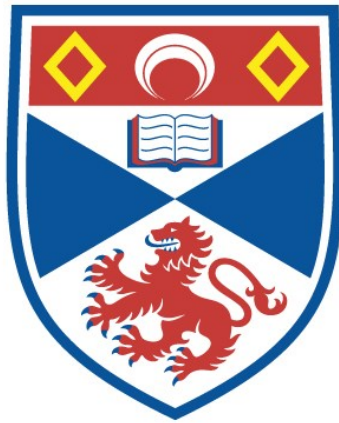


**BECOMING SOVEREIGN IN POST-SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA:  
'DISCURSIVE ENCOUNTERS' BETWEEN TAJIKISTAN AND  
UZBEKISTAN**

**Mohira Suyarkulova**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St Andrews**



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# Becoming Sovereign in post-Soviet Central Asia

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‘Discursive encounters’ between Tajikistan and  
Uzbekistan

**Mohira Suyarkulova**

This dissertation is submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of International Relations,  
University of St Andrews

**March 2011**

## **Candidate's declaration**

I, Mohira Suyarkulova, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 76,214 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in February 2007 and as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in May 2008; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2007 and 2011.

I received assistance in the writing of this thesis in respect of language, grammar, spelling and syntax, which was provided by Simon Taylor.

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# Abstract

In 1991 republics of Soviet Central Asia were reluctantly 'launched' into independence. The central puzzle of this dissertation is: "How has sovereign statehood been 'constructed' in the post-independence period in the absence of history of anti-colonial struggle?" This is an analysis of state sovereignty as a practice that is performative and interactive through the examination of 'discursive encounters' between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Such analysis traces temporal and spatial dimensions of dialogical sovereign identity construction.

In post-Soviet Tajikistan and Uzbekistan sovereignties have been performed in a dialogue, through dynamic interactions with one another. The work of asserting state sovereignty is performed by various actors who claim to impersonate the state and speak on its behalf. Multiple narratives of the self are articulated in relation to the relevant "interlocutor", whose reactions and counter-articulations are "fed back" into the narrative of the self. The right to existence of these states as agents of international relations is justified through such 'discursive encounters' that simulate sovereignty. I propose the Möbius strip as a conceptual model for understanding the process of sovereignty-assertion.

Competing historiographies present two irreconcilable narratives: history of an *ethnic group* and history of the *territory* of the current state. These are consistent with the nature of nationalisms in each state. While Tajik nationalists long for 'historical Tajikistan', Uzbek nationalism is inherently conservative and defensive of territorial sovereignty.

The controversy surrounding the Roghun HPP is an example of the daily construction and maintenance a state. Competing principles of water sharing contributed to an ongoing crisis in Tajik-Uzbek relations. Sovereignty is simulated within the periods and zones of 'exception' via a Möbian mechanism of dialogical meaning-making, whereby each side strives to exploit the inherent ambiguity of signifiers in order to advance their own narrative of the self and other.

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

*"Tajiks and Uzbeks are one people, speaking different languages" (President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov)*

*"Tajiks were never the same people as Uzbeks!" (Rahim Masov, Tajik historian)*

### Thesis topic and rationale

Almost twenty years ago, in autumn of 1991, fifteen new states came into being. Countries called 'Tajikistan' and 'Uzbekistan' were proclaimed among them as the new independent states, seeking international recognition and sovereign equality with other states under the international law. While they were soon recognized by the international community and became members of international organizations such as the United Nations, Central Asian states<sup>1</sup> did not possess previous history of sovereign statehood within their current borders and could not boast of anti-colonial struggle prior to their emergence. First created in 1920-30s as part of the Soviet Union's federative structure, the two former Soviet republics saw the second period of externally-propelled state-emergence in the decades following 1991. Both state-formation periods occurred on the waves of 'forced' decolonization following the breakdown of two empires – the Russian and the Soviet, respectively.

This thesis examines the two periods of state-creation in Central Asia to trace the emergence of Tajik and Uzbek states. Under the condition of externally-imposed nation-statehood, whereby there was no clear struggle for independence, how did new states' representatives assert their sovereignty? In answering this question, this thesis turns to the voices from the respective countries' formal and informal representatives in order

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, "Central Asia" is defined as the five republics of the former Soviet Union: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In the Soviet designation they were labelled as 'Sredniāia Aziā i Kazakhstan' [Middle Asia and Kazakhstan]. 'Tsentrāl'naia Aziā' [Central Asia] became popular after the republics gained independence in 1991, as a more inclusive term which incorporated Kazakhstan firmly into the region.

to see how the historical instability of identity and boundaries are stabilised and naturalised through discourse and practice. In particular, this thesis analyses relations and interactions between newly independent Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to trace the process of sovereignty-assertion and boundary-naturalisation.

From the very beginning of Central Asian statehoods in 1920-30s, the relationship between designations 'Tajik' and 'Uzbek' have been characterized by inherent ambiguity and the notion that they stand in opposition. In this thesis this complex relationship is explored through interactions among various actors claiming to represent the 'Tajik' and the 'Uzbek'. In the process of assertion of sovereignty of the newly-emergent states, each side engages in a constant dialogue with the 'other'. Sovereignty therefore is found in the dialogical process of articulation of the self and the other as coherent autonomous subjects of international relations across history and within certain territorial boundaries.

Since both states first appeared on the world map, they have been connected as mutually defining opposites. The two states owe their emergence as political entities in their current borders to the National Territorial Delimitation undertaken by the Bolsheviks in 1924-1929. They were created as a single unit within the newly established Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, with Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) being a subordinate part of hierarchically superior formation of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). Five years later, in 1929, the Tajik autonomy was promoted to the status of a 'soviet socialist' republic and was granted a part of Ferghana valley (Khujand/ Leninobod region), which formerly belonged to Uzbekistan. The ancient cities of great cultural and historical significance, Samarqand and Bukhara, with predominantly Farsi-speaking populations remained within the territory of Uzbek SSR (Roy, 2000: 61). The short period between 1924 and 1929 thus saw the emergence of a separate Tajik national consciousness and claim to sovereign statehood within the USSR among elites self-identifying with Tajikness as separate from and opposed to Uzbekness. The second period of state creation in 1990s was similarly accompanied by the intensification and radicalisation of 'othering' of the neighbour, especially in Tajikistan's historians' revisionist view of the history of delimitation.

When in March 1991 Mikhail Gorbachev called a referendum on preservation of the Soviet Union, Tajiks and Uzbeks went to the polls and expressed their overwhelming support in favour of continuing to be citizens of the USSR.<sup>2</sup> Thus, contrary to familiar narratives of struggles for independence in the decolonisation context of the second half of twentieth century, Central Asian states' independence was not an achievement resulting from a long and bitter nationalist liberation struggle. Rather, the 'Muslim' Soviet republics of Middle Asia and Kazakhstan were reluctant to let go of the Union and declared independence only after it became obvious that the dissolution was a historical fact. The leaders of Central Asian republics worked with Gorbachev, until the very end, on the new Union treaty; ready to ratify it and to agree to less than full independence. However, once the 'parade of sovereignties' began, none of the former Union republics were willing to settle on a lesser status than the rest of their peers. In short, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan did not struggle for independence. Rather, it just 'happened' to them.

The central puzzle of this thesis therefore falls in two parts: (1) how did the Central Asian states justify their existence and claim to sovereignty given the circumstances of their independence, and (2) to what extent, in the case of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, was the 'other' important in assertion of the newly acquired sovereign status.

This study contributes to the knowledge of international relations by exploring a specific case of post-colonial statehood and sovereignty. As such, it constitutes an addition to our understanding of how post-Soviet decolonisation process differed from that of other regions' and what forms post-colonial statehood in Central Asian assumed. The approach of this study is innovative in that it looks at sovereignty-assertion as a dynamic process taking place within the context of 'discursive encounters' with relevant others. We shall trace the 'dialogical' process of articulation of self as a sovereign actor, whereby a narrative meaning is produced which connects the past, the present and the future.

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<sup>2</sup> Ninety six percent of Tajik population (with 94% turnout) and ninety four percent of Uzbeks (turnout 95%) voted in favour of preservation of the Union. The overall result for those republics that took part in the referendum (Azerbaijan, Estonia, Latvia, Moldova, Lithuania and Georgia boycotted it) was 76.4% with turnout at 80 percent in favour (Walker, 2003: 118).

Discourse analysis is employed as an analytical and methodological strategy in order to identify the areas of contested meanings, the battlefields where the matters of identity, security and sovereignty are disputed. By analyzing these areas of contestation we are able to observe how sovereignty was constituted in dialogues between various actors speaking on behalf of the 'people', the nation, the state at the turning junctures of history. This dissertation, therefore, seeks to analyse how sovereignty was articulated in Central Asia at different points in history. It also looks at history-writing itself as a means of sovereignty-asserting narrative-making.

The other important aspect of the study is to examine the spatial dimension of sovereignty assertion whereby the territorial boundaries of the new states were upheld or contested through discourse and practice. Partly, the contestations of territorial boundaries take place within the historiographical narratives that establish certain territories as rightful 'homelands' for an ethnic group or a tradition of indigenous statehood. The case of the ongoing controversy over the use of water resources between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is another instance of how sovereignty is asserted territorially, where the matter of contention is transboundary.

Two case studies are presented in the empirical part of this thesis. They are intended as the case studies of 'discursive encounters' between Tajik and Uzbek academics and politicians over articulation of sovereign identity in 'time and space'. In other words, the objective is to illustrate how sovereign statehood was justified during the state-creation periods in terms of history and what geographical parameters were advocated for actualisation of the sovereign identity of 'the people'. I argue that (1) both sides played on the ambiguity of sameness and difference of Tajik and Uzbek identity, and (2) each side used this ambiguity in order to advance its vision of idealised state. The Tajik vision of the state that would incorporate the rightful 'homeland' is inherently revisionist of the existing inter-state borders, while Uzbekistan's is defensive and justificatory of them. It is argued further that the space of ambiguity is the necessary condition for development of political debate and the source of discursive encounters between the two sides.

## **Ambiguity of boundary between ‘Tajikness’ and ‘Uzbekness’**

The former Politburo member, Nuriddin Muhitdinov, tells an illustrative anecdote in his memoirs (1994). In 1955 on the way back from a state visit to India, the Soviet delegation led by Nikita Khrushchev made a stopover in the capital of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (UzSSR), Tashkent. It was the first time in almost a hundred years that the leadership of the country visited this faraway province. Khrushchev decided to address the cheering crowds who had gathered at the capital’s main square to welcome the delegation. “Good day, my dear Tajiks! We have brought you cordial greetings from the people of India, Burma, Afghanistan”, he started his speech. And then continued: “You, Tajiks, are hard workers; well done for producing such high yields in cotton harvests! As for your neighbours Uzbeks, they are not doing that great. First of all, there are some among their leadership who oppose mechanisation...” (162-163). Muhitdinov had to tactfully point out to the idiosyncratic Soviet leader that he was in *Uzbekistan* and the *Uzbek* people were listening to him with great attention. After slight embarrassment, Khrushchev made light of the awkward situation by saying that the audience shared his sense of humour and passed his ‘little test’ by listening attentively to the public criticism of the republic’s leadership.

The above anecdote is illustrative of several issues that are central to this thesis and that are going to be main themes within this introductory chapter. These themes are: (1) an ambiguity, lack of clarity regarding identity and difference between the designations “Tajik” and “Uzbek”, despite which there exists (2) a “myth of ethnic animosity” between the two groups thus designated, which in turn stems from (3) the conceptualisation of politics in Central Asia as located within a permanent “state of exception”, whereby not issues, but “group interests” are perceived to be the driving force behind politics.

As the above anecdote about Khrushchev’s faux pas suggests, Central Asia occupied a rather remote and obscure place in the ‘mental maps’ of world leaders. Even in the Russian imagination, the land conterminous with today’s Uzbekistan and Tajikistan occupied peripheral position. Thus, in the aftermath of the Great October revolution in December 1917, Vladimir Lenin made an appeal to the “Muslim workers of Russia and the East”, in which he addressed, among others, “Kyrgyz and Sarts” (Abashin, 2005).

Both terms were Russian designations for locals and the meanings of these terms would undergo serious revision during the process of delimitation between 1924 and 1936, as discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. “Kyrgyz” would be recognised as a misnomer for “Kazakh”<sup>3</sup> and the group formerly designated as “Kara-Kyrgyz” would be named simply “Kyrgyz” from then on. The “Sarts” as a category for classification of Central Asian population would disappear altogether in 1926 (See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the case of “Sarts”). The people who used to be Sarts would be reclassified mainly as “Uzbeks”, although there continued to be serious doubts regarding whether “Sarts” were ‘really’ Tajiks rather than Uzbeks (Roy, 2000: 17; Bergne, 2007: 8).

We can see, therefore, that the identities in Central Asia emerged as a result of the colonial encounter, an important part of which was the imperial power’s attempts to appropriately classify and catalogue the locals. This process was wrought due to complex patterns of settlement and migration, hybridity, fluidity and overlaps in the self- and other-designations used by the local populations. Since late Tsarist period to this day, the lack of clarity regarding the exact configurations of identity and difference between Tajiks and Uzbeks persists.

Such ambiguity of the identity and alterity between Central Asian peoples is rooted in the complex history of coexistence within the same territories, intermixing of cultures and economic co-dependence of the groups occupying mutually complementary economic and environmental niches. The blurred boundaries between various groups result in resemblances in culture, language and way of life across the region.

In the Soviet *‘druzhba narodov’* [‘friendship of the peoples’] discourse Tajiks and Uzbeks were represented as brethren-peoples [*bratskie narody*]. Both the official diplomatic and popular discourses of Tajik-Uzbek relations make use of narratives, metaphors and phrases from this established repertoire. A good example of that is the brochure entitled *O druzhbe tadzhikskogo i uzbekskogo narodov* [On the Friendship between Tajik and Uzbek peoples] (Radjabov, 1968), which was dedicated to the Decade of Tajik

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Kazakh’ [or Qazaq, Kazak, Qozoq] from Turkic root for “adventurer, guerrilla, nomad”, from *qaz* “to wander” has the same root and sounds identical to the Russian ‘Cossack’ and was probably replaced with ‘Kyrgyz’ to avoid confusion between these two distinct groups populating part of modern Kazakhstan (Roy 2000:7).

culture in Uzbekistan. In the opening paragraphs the Tajik and Uzbek identity are first constructed as essentially the same (both in the class and ethno-folkloric understanding of the term “the people”) and then differentiated as distinct based on the linguistic principle:

Especially close relations have been established between Tajiks and Uzbeks. And this is not coincidental. ... Over the centuries their national traditions emerged and grew in strength. They wore the same dress, cooked the same food, [and they] often intermarried [*rodnilis' semjami*]. Their mores and customs were as close and resembled each other as much as two droplets of water do [*kak dve kapli vody*]. From the dawn of times, due to the force of the laws of historical development [*v silu istoricheskikh zakonornostei*], these people spoke different languages. However, the overwhelming majority of the Tajiks of Ferghana, Samarkand, Bukhara, Leninabad knew Uzbek from early childhood. In essence both Tajik and Uzbek languages were and remain considered to be as native to the population of Samarkand, Bukhara, Surkhan-Darya oblasts of Uzbekistan and many regions of South-Western and Northern Tajikistan (Radjabov, 1968: 3).<sup>4</sup>

The difference between Tajiks and Uzbeks is initially presented as that of linguistic nature. The following, however, draws a picture of bilingual communities interspersing the territories of both of the republics. The similarities between Tajiks and Uzbeks are emphasised throughout the text of the brochure. To underline the genetic connections between these ethnic groups, the author quotes the Tajik poet Boki Rahim-zade (Radjabov, 1968: 9):

The centuries of a common path  
Have made us relatives,  
“Are you a Tajik or an Uzbek?” –  
Sometimes people ask us.  
No wonder in that:  
We resemble,  
Each other like blood brothers.

Exactly thirty years later the President of independent Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov has used those same lines to describe Tajiks and Uzbeks as closely related people. In the speech at the official opening of the days of the Republic of Tajikistan in Uzbekistan in 1998, president Karimov used similar rhetoric structures to those we find in the 1968 brochure mentioned above:

The Almighty himself moulded Tajiks and Uzbek from the same clay. Our peoples have been friends for millennia now, they intermarry [*rodniatsia*], overcome difficulties together, together they build their future. We drink water of the same river; on the same field we sow our seeds. We are indistinguishable neither by our names nor by our looks. In one of his *ghazals* in Tajik language the great Alisher Navoiy wrote for a reason: “The eyes are Turkic, and the lashes are

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<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise indicated all translations from Russian and Uzbek languages are by myself.

Tajik". Boki Rahimzoda was absolutely right when he said: "Hey, friend, tell me [in Tajik], are you a Tajik or an Uzbek [in Uzbek]?" Tell me is there a need to translate this line?! ...Uzbeks and Tajiks – are a single people speaking two different languages. This truth has a special significance today, as never before, when our people – Uzbeks and Tajiks – having achieved independence are building their national states (Karimov, 1998).

Both the propaganda piece by a Tajik scholar of the Soviet period and the speech of the president of independent Uzbekistan construct sameness of Tajiks and Uzbeks through references to a number of traits and shared experiences. Physical appearance, genetic intermixing and geographical proximity are all cited as proofs of 'brotherhood'. Body and kinship metaphors are used to talk of the closeness of the two peoples.

The 1968 brochure sites example of the selfless friendship between Uzbeks and Tajiks, for whom the common all-union interests stand above national ones: their joint revolutionary struggle in 1916-17, the collective assault on *basmachi* movement during the 1920s, the "enormous help from the Uzbek brothers in the economic and cultural development" of Tajikistan during the time when Tajik ASSR was incorporated into the Uzbek SSR (1924-1929), the transfer of some of the lands for cultivation from Uzbekistan to Tajikistan in 1959, the help in rebuilding of Tashkent after the earthquake in Tashkent in 1966 (Radjabov, 1968: 9-16).

For Karimov in 1998, however, the past history of struggles and mutual help has an anti-colonial flavour. The struggles of the common ancestors of these two people are interpreted in his speech as their long path to independence: "Our peoples together fought against the conquerors, turning into Tumaris, Shirak, Spitamen, Temur Malik.<sup>5</sup> We lived through the last colonial yoke, which lasted for a century and a half, together. And here, finally, we have reached independence" (Karimov, 1998). Karimov also mentions more recent history, focusing his attention on the *Jadid* movement that had a more nationalist character: "Even during the hardest years of tyranny such genuine sons of Uzbek and Tajik people as Ahmad Donish and Mahmudhoja Behbudi, Abdulla Kodiri and Sadridin Ayni, Abdulhamid Chulpan and Abdurauf Fitrat fought a common struggle for the ideals of enlightenment in friendship and cooperation" (Karimov 1998). Chapter 4 looks more closely at how historiographic repertoires in the post-independence period built on the Soviet discourses, practices while revising history to

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<sup>5</sup> Historical personalities in Central Asian history, who opposed various foreign invasions of the region, and were identified as "freedom-fighters" both in Soviet and post-Soviet history writing,



retrospectively narrate sovereign statehood as an inevitable outcome of a teleological course of historical evolution.

### **‘Ethnic animosity’: ‘Tajik’ and ‘Uzbek’ as binary opposites**

Despite the lack of certainty of the differences between the two identities, Khrushchev intuitively juxtaposes Tajik to Uzbek, they are automatically conceived of as antipodes. Indeed, although the shared cultural heritage made the task of separating what is ‘Tajik’ from what is ‘Uzbek’ very difficult in the early years of the Soviet rule in the region (Sengupta, 2003; Bergne, 2007: 126), Tajikness and Uzbekness emerged as conditions of being of one another, precisely because ultimately the differences between the two are undeterminable.

The notion of antagonism between Tajiks and Uzbeks, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan has not abated in significance with the acquisition of independence by the Central Asian states in 1991 (Jonson, 2006: 108; Schoeberlein, 1994; Rubin, 1994). On the contrary, observers of Central Asian politics, journalists and politicians alike, have pointed out the persisting conflict between these two states, a regional ‘cold war’ that has many a time resulted in crises in Tajik-Uzbek relations. Many trace this conflict to a primordial condition of Manichean antagonism between the “indigenous” Persian-speaking settled populations and the waves of invasions of the nomadic Turko-Mongol tribes. The ‘working paper’ that was written in preparation for the national territorial delimitation of the region in 1920s sums up this narrative very well:

The Tajiks are the only people [in Central Asia] of Iranian origin, who since time immemorial have been living in the frontiers of Bukhara and the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic ... The conquering Turkic peoples enslaved them. Part of them became totally Turkicised and adopted the language of their conquerors, while the rest, although they kept their language, took refuge in the mountainous regions of Samarkand oblast’ and Bukhara, and in the valleys of the mountain rivers and the basin of the Syr Darya and the Zerafshan where they were driven by their conquerors (quoted in Bergne, 2007: 3).

The thesis of the centuries-old standoff between the Turkic and Iranian peoples, which in the modern conditions translates into the conflict between Tajiks and Uzbek is rather common in the expert accounts of the region. This narrative has become dominant in the Tajik historiography (Ya’qubov, 2001; Hakimov, 2005; Khojaev, 2002; Nabieva & Zikriyoev, 2001; Masov, 1991, 1995, and 2003) and among some Western scholars’

(Rakowska-Harmstone, 1970; Bashiri, 1998). Sovietologists during the Cold War period follow the Soviet narrative by identifying the racial differences between the two groups, although when confronted with racial ambiguity, the defining principle becomes the linguistic practice, as this quote demonstrates:

The indigenous people of the area are the Iranian Tadjiks, considered to be the most ancient racial group in Central Asia. The mountain Tadjiks ...represent an almost pure ancient Iranian stock. Some non-Iranian admixture is found among the Galcha – the Tadjiks of the Darwaz and Karategin mountains. The Tadjiks of the plains, who mixed freely with numerous invaders, have many Mongoloid racial features and are frequently indistinguishable in physical type from the Turkic-speaking Uzbeks, their Iranian language alone marking them as Tadjiks. A nineteenth-century traveller in Bukhara characterised the Tadjiks as handsome, polished, intelligent, accommodating, and willing to adjust to rule by a superior force, a judgement that appears to hold true also modern circumstances. Relations between the Uzbeks and the Tadjiks have traditionally been hostile because the former ruled the country before the revolution, treating the Tadjik subjects with cruelty and contempt. (Rakowska-Harmstone, 1970: 8- 9).

A lot of commentators go even further back in history to find “the ancient roots of what has been projected as a Tajik-Uzbek tension” (Chatterjee, 2002: 23). Iraj Bashiri (1998) quoting Ghafurov (1972), for instance, finds the roots of the 1990s conflict in Tajikistan in the events that took place in the Tenth Century during the reign of the Samanid dynasty in the region, or even further in the mists of antiquity projected onto the epic struggle between Turan and Iran in Firdausi’s *Shahname* [Book of Kings].

Sometimes, the theories of the antagonism between the Turkic and the Iranian peoples are compounded with the discussions of whom the Russian imperialist administration and Orientalists favoured after the conquest of the region. While there was a normative racial preference for peoples considered descendants of ‘Aryans’ among Russian anthropologists (Laruelle, 2007), the ‘Uzbeks’ were considered the most important nationality in the region (Allworth, 1990). Most analysts agree that Uzbekistan emerged as the winner from the process of national territorial delimitation (Masov, 1991; Haugen, 2003). The great ancient cultural centres of Samarkand and Bukhara, as well as the colonial capital Tashkent were included in Uzbekistan despite those cities being disputed by Tajikistan and Kazakhstan respectively. However, Edward Allworth (1990) saw the strategy of division of the region as an essentially anti-Uzbek policy since it prevented the integrative processes in the region driven by the assimilative force of ‘Uzbek’ identity.

Moreover, this discussion is even carried into the expert analysis of the causes and dynamics of the civil conflict in Tajikistan in 1990s.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes the role of the Uzbek minority, as a group with distinct interests, which identifies with the ethnic homeland across the border more than with Dushanbe, is assumed to be self-evident within such analyses. Statistics on the numbers of ethnic Uzbeks in Tajikistan and ethnic Tajiks in Uzbekistan are quoted, implying that 'Tajiks' and 'Uzbeks' living across the are essentially the same as their 'co-ethnics' in the eponymous states, identify with their 'homelands' and share a political agenda. While the Tajik nationalists do express concern regarding treatment of 'Tajiks' in Uzbekistan -- many of whom the Tajik government believes have been forced to register as Uzbeks and assimilate into the Uzbek culture -- numerous anthropological studies and personal anecdotes show that Tajik or Farsi-speakers in Uzbekistan do not always identify themselves as 'Tajik'. Thus, for instance, Schoeberlein (1994) writes that most of the Tajik-speakers in Samarkand, call themselves as Uzbeks, referring to their "dress, lifestyle, and so on as 'Uzbek customs'". Although the authorities often have registered Tajik-speakers as 'Uzbeks' against individuals' will or without their knowledge, resulting in different members of a family being registered as belonging to different nationalities, this contradiction is considered to be "a matter of amusement at most, and more often of complete insignificance" (Schoeberlein, 1994: 122). When asked to identify themselves outside the reference of the Soviet grid of nationalities, Tajik-speaking people of Uzbekistan often first of all identify as 'Samarkandi' or 'Bukhari'. One therefore should take the statistics of 'minority' populations in Central Asia with a healthy dose of scepticism.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Tajik civil war lasted from May 1992 till June 1997, with the most intense fighting taking place within the first year. It is estimated that between 50,000 and 100,000 people died as casualties of war and around 1.2 m were displaced.

<sup>7</sup> According to the last Soviet census conducted in 1989, 'Uzbeks' constituted 23.52% (1,197,841 people), while the percentage of Tajiks was estimated at 62.29 (3,172,200 people) in Tajikistan. In Uzbekistan, Tajiks only accounted for 4.7% of the total population, with Uzbeks constituting 71.4 % (Goskomstat SSSR, 1990). The data on Tajiks in Uzbekistan has been contested by Tajik nationalists, who argue that the actual ratio is closer to 40% (Usmonov 2006: 12). In 1997 the CIA World Factbook estimated the percentages of Tajik and Uzbek minorities in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan respectively to remain the same, while the titular nations share rose by 4-5 %. Olivier Ferrando writes that data on ethnic composition of the population is virtually non-existent in Uzbekistan, as it is the only former Soviet republics that has not conducted a census since independence and where statistics are treated as a state secret. Tajikistan undertook a census in January 2000, using the census forms identical to the ones used in the last Soviet census of 1989. However, the internal administrative borders of the regions within the republic have been reorganised, which affected the ethnic groups' ratios within the administrative units. Moreover, the authorities reinstituted the groups formerly subsumed under the designation of 'Uzbek' as officially recognised and accepted 'nationalities', while keeping the Eastern Iranian groups of Pamiris within the

Moreover, any assumptions of a shared 'group interests' of the diaspora population across the border is not founded in any evidence. In fact, the research of Uzbek minority in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan has demonstrated a lack of interest let alone a clearly articulated policy in regard to the 'co-ethnics' abroad (Fumagalli, 2006, 2007).

Despite this, Uzbekistan's involvement in the Tajik civil war is often discussed in terms of such essential unity of 'Uzbeks' across the republics' borders. At the same time some groups within Tajikistan are described as Uzbekicised and therefore loyal to Uzbekistan. Sergei Abashin rightly points out that an expert discourse has emerged that analyses the roots and dynamics of the conflict in Tajikistan which calls on an ethnicised conception of regionalism as its central component (Abashin, 2007: 234-235). Within this discourse all cultural and social differences attributed to the opposing groups within the conflict were correlated with 'sub-ethnic' underpinnings. Tashkent is therefore depicted as exerting influence by supporting "its own", Uzbekicised region of Leninabad/Khujand within Tajikistan, which despite being populated by majority Uzbek-speaker, was transferred to Tajikistan in the final delimitation in 1929. Khujand geographically and economically is more integrated with Uzbekistan than with Tajikistan, while elites from Khujand were in power for most of the Soviet period. It is assumed that the Khujandi elites were loyal to Uzbekistan and even declared of their intention to secede and possibly join Uzbekistan in 1996 (Martin, 1997).

Much is made in the analysis of the civil war dynamics of presumably Uzbek ethnicity of the Popular Front leaders (Safarali Kenjaev, Faizali Saidov, Mahmud Khudoberdiev and Ibod Boymatov) and their links to Uzbekistan (Horsman, 1999: 41; Nourzhanov 2005: 115). In her analysis of the images of the Other in Tajik literature across three decades (1970-1990s), Anaita Khudonazar, uses kinship metaphors to refer to three others<sup>8</sup> -- former colonial master (Russia), neighbouring state (Uzbekistan) and the internal other (Khujand):

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designation 'Tajik'. As a result 1.3% of population (nearly 80,000 people) were reidentified, which contributed, but did not entirely determine the decrease in the share of population designated as 'Uzbek' in Tajikistan by -8.2% (15.3%) compared to 1989 census (Ferrando 2008: 491-497).

<sup>8</sup> Blakkisrud and Nozimova talk of three others that stand in opposition to the Tajik self that emerged out of their comparative analysis between Soviet and post-Soviet history textbooks in Tajikistan -- 'constituting other' of the Uzbeks, the internalised other of 'the external self' of Russian/Soviet identity, and the 'internal other' of Islam, which is seen as a threat and largely ignored in history textbook writing of post-Soviet Tajikistan (2010: 175).

Russia was seen as both a motherly figure and an evil step-mother. Russia had established Tajikistan as a state and nourished it socially and economically, but at the same time it had deformed its identity. Uzbekistan was portrayed as the evil step-father because of the demarcation during the 1920s and the loss of Samarqand and Bukhara. Khujand was seen as a half-brother because it monopolized political power in Tajikistan and imposed its half-Uzbek, half-Tajik culture upon other regions of Tajikistan (Khudonazar, 2004: 20).

Although Uzbekistan's support helped install Emomali Rahmonov as the president, that backing was reportedly withdrawn when in 1993 he initiated the process of "Kulyabisation" of Tajik politics (Akiner, 2001: 64-66). Uzbekistan plays the role of a 'big brother' to Tajikistan in this discourse. It is believed to secretly and openly interfere into the internal affairs, to exert pressure on Tajikistan by exploiting its structural energy and economic dependence on Uzbekistan's infrastructure and resources (Jonson, 2006: 112-13). It is also reported that Uzbekistan supported local warlords of Uzbek ethnicity (Mahmud Khudoberdiev) in their revolt against Rahmonov's power. Many analysts believe that Karimov felt threatened by the power-sharing deal of the Tajik General Peace Accord of 1997 that incorporated the United Tajik Opposition into the government structures (Horseman, 1999: 42).<sup>9</sup>

In Uzbek official discourse, Tajikistan became the site of danger, the source of conflict, drugs and religious extremism in the region (Horsman, 1999: 43; Megoran 2004). In March 1998, when several religious leaders in Uzbekistan were arrested as alleged Islamic radicals, Karimov was reported to have said: "They want to turn Uzbekistan into a second Tajikistan. Such people must be shot in their heads. If necessary, I will shoot them myself, if you lack the resolve" (RFE/RL Newslines 1998, May 4). After the bombings in Tashkent in February 1999, of which the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Juma Namangani were accused of orchestrating, Uzbekistan closed its border with Tajikistan alleging the connection existed between the neighbour and the terrorist attacks (Gayeva & Chubchenko 1999, February 26).

The theme of the Uzbek intervention into Tajik politics is the echo of the history of perceived violence and injustice caused by the separation of "Tajiks" in Bukhara and Samarkand from the Tajik state in 1920s. The narrative of the loss of the ethnic

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<sup>9</sup> For instance, the minister of emergency situations Mirzo Ziyoev allegedly had a close connection with Juma Namangani, the leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). The two men are believed to have fought alongside one another during the civil war and Ziyoev was even said to be married to a relative of Namangani (Rashid 2002).

homeland is transposed to modern days. The theme of Uzbek aggression and malevolence is necessarily accompanied by the themes of betrayal and the search for “true” ethnic roots of individuals and groups (Abashin, 2007: 205). The dominant Tajik narrative of Uzbek desire to prevent the materialisation of a Tajik state and the betrayal of the Tajik cause by intellectuals suffering from a ‘false national consciousness’ is most vividly expressed in the works by Rahim Masov. His writing since the publication of *Istoriia topornogo razdela* [History of Crude Division] in 1991 has become the voice of resentment towards Uzbekistan within the official Tajik discourse, echoed in post-independence history textbooks and popular discourse (Hakimov 2005, Khojaev 2002, Muhtorov 2000, Nabieva & Zikriyoev 2001, 2006, Ya’qubov 2001).

One can summarize Masov’s theses in the following key points. The Great October Revolution of the Bolshevik party that took place in 1917 was the greatest event in the history of Tajik people. While the project of the national territorial delimitation was justified and necessary, what the Bolsheviks envisaged did not translate into reality. Many fatal mistakes were made in large part due to careerism and lack of national self-consciousness of Tajiks themselves, who were “poisoned” by the venom of Pan-Turkism. The Pan-Turkists (or “Great Uzbek chauvinists”) initiated “in essence, genocide of Tajik people” (Masov, 1991: 11). Uzbeks (Turks) pushed Tajiks into the mountainous parts of the region, assimilated them [Tajiks], took their lands away, appropriated their culture and achievements, and destroyed “Historical Tajikistan” (which includes territories currently included in Uzbekistan). In the 1920s Uzbeks tried to prevent the emergence of Tajik statehood by all means. Tajiks within Uzbekistan were subjected to a process of assimilation, which was “very dangerous” and amounted to “overt [*neprikrityi*] genocide” (77). Even though there were no mass killings, i.e. no genocide in the conventional sense of the word, it was still a genocide “not physical, but documentary”, as a result of which “Tajiks as people no longer existed in Uzbekistan” (78). The image of the enemy for Masov, therefore, appears in the form of the Turkic/Uzbek other, rather than the former colonial master.

Although the works of Masov are dedicated to the modern history (1920s), he continuously makes references to the ancient struggle between the Turks (i.e. Uzbeks) and the Iranian (Tajik) population in the region. Masov proclaims the pure and ancient

ethnic essence of the Tajiks. Thus mentioning of “Tajik people” is almost invariably qualified by “the most ancient indigenous people of Central Asia”. He quotes several Russian anthropologists and historians, who wrote that Tajiks are of “pure Aryan stock”, and himself makes a note of the racial difference between the Tajiks and the rest of the population in the region, saying that Tajiks “have more in common with the Slavic and the Indo-European peoples rather than with Turks” (23). This naturalization, even biologisation of Tajik and Uzbek identities together with the denial of existence of a hybrid identity is what gives rise to the discourse of genocide that is most evident in Masov’s works (1991, 1995). This line of thinking finds its most radical and even absurd expression in the book *Zalozhniki imperii* [Hostages of the Empire] by a midwife-gynecologist Sa’diniso Hakimova (1998).<sup>10</sup> Such facile explanation of ethnic animosity arising from the ‘ancient hatreds’ is highly problematic and does not produce much insight into the politics of the region’s states today.

**Table 1. 1. Binary opposites and hybridity in dominant articulations of Tajik/Uzbek identities**

<b>Designation</b>	<b>Tajik</b>	<b>Sart</b>	<b>Uzbek</b>
<b>Language/Heritage</b>	Iranian/Farsi/Tojiki	Bilingual /Mixed	Turkic/Chaghatay/O’zbek
<b>‘Race’/phenotype</b>	‘Europeoid’ /White	‘Metis’ (Mixed Europeoid and Mongoloid)	Mongoloid/‘Asian’
<b>Traditional/historic lifestyle</b>	Always been settled,	Population migrations,	Nomads, invaders, non-indigenous conquerors

<sup>10</sup> During her exile in Tehran, based on many years of experience of work in midwifery in Tajikistan, Hakimova wrote a book which is an indictment of the healthcare system in Soviet Central Asia. According to her, in order to fix the statistical data, the midwives practiced “writing-off of stillborn and prematurely born infants as miscarriages”. This was allegedly done in order to keep the deaths in childbirth and infant mortality rates low. The midwives were overwhelmingly women of “European nationalities” (i.e. German, Russian or Ukranian), which was not a coincidence, according to Hakimova. In her understanding this amounted to the “systematic (*planomernoe*) annihilation of Tajik ethnos, which especially took up an “extraordinary scale and scope in Uzbekistan, which is mainly populated by Tajiks”, and in Tajikistan itself during the post-war years with the silent support of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC CPSU) and the Union government” (Hakimova 1998: 2). Hakimova does not mention if similar practices existed in Uzbekistan in cases with Uzbek women giving birth, neither does she recognize this as a practice common to the entire region (which had the highest birth rates in the USSR and had the worst medical care system, especially maternity care). In the preface to the book, Hakimova gives an account of the Tajik refugees during the civil war trying to cross the Pianj river to enter the Afghan territory and slaughtered by the Uzbek military. She then proceeds to retell Masov’s thesis of assimilation of Uzbekistan’s Tajiks from which she then makes a mental leap to alleged ‘genocide’ of Tajik infants in Uzbekistan.

	autochthonous, most ancient indigenous people	sedentarisation of former nomads, semi- nomadic existence	
<b>Relation to 'high' culture</b>	Bearers of 'high culture'	Cultural hybridity	Looters and appropriators/usurpers of Tajik cultural heritage
<b>Regional differences</b>	'Pure' Iranian stock (including peoples of Pamir).	Tajiks of the plains, Khujandis, Samarkandi, Bukhari people	Exclusively Uzbek-speaking population

### Current state of Tajik-Uzbek relations

It is still quite common for the official diplomatic discussion of the mutual relations to be ritualistically prefixed by mentioning the 'centuries-long' good neighborly relations, cultural and kinship ties between the two nations. This discourse remains unchanged from the Soviet times and finds its final expression in the "Treaty of Eternal Friendship" signed between the two states in 2000.<sup>11</sup>

The relations between the two states, however, are quite far from the idyllic state of "eternal friendship". Tajikistan's economy depends heavily on Uzbek infrastructure, a fact that is often exploited by Uzbekistan. Part of Tajikistan, Khujand, has more ties economically and infra-structurally to Uzbekistan than Tajikistan. During Soviet times it was the hub for the region's transport routes. Nowadays this is no longer the case, as the transport web crosses the state borders, which the Uzbek side polices. Tajikistan is completely dependent on Uzbekistan for railroad links (Jonson, 2006: 115). Some of the measures that Uzbekistan introduced to the railroads have led to a complete standstill on several stretches of Tajik railroad.<sup>12</sup> More recently, the crisis in Tajik-Uzbek relations escalated over the dispute over water management regimes, whereby

<sup>11</sup> Previously, on 10 January 1997, the "Treaty of eternal friendship between the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan" was signed in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>12</sup> For instance, in March 2010, Tajik ministry of foreign affairs protested against delays of goods destined for Tajikistan in Uzbekistan's territory. Foreign Ministry spokesman Davlat Nazriev said some 1,000 freight cars were being held up at the Khavos, Qarshi, Jayron, and Kudukli stations in Uzbekistan (RFE/RL report, March 23, 2010).



Uzbekistan has been exerting pressure on Tajikistan by stopping the Tajik railroad freight passing through Uzbek territory in order to delay the construction of the Roghun dam in Tajikistan (This will be analysed in Chapter 5). Similar dependence exists in the highway connection, as Tajikistan still lacks a year-round link between its northern and southern provinces. When Uzbekistan blocks connecting roads, parts of the country become isolated from the rest of Tajikistan.

The border regime between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is highly restrictive to trade and travel. The checks on the posts are often humiliating, the procedures unnecessarily bureaucratized and long. Commercial freight is taxed both formally and informally while people are subjected to arbitrary denial of passage, prohibitive visa requirements, extortion and bodily searches (Reeves, 2005). The enforcement of this draconian border regime followed the 1999 explosions in Tashkent.<sup>13</sup> In 1999 Uzbekistan closed the border posts, introduced a visa regime, increased tariffs and taxes on goods in transit, and mined the border with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in the Ferghana Valley. The mining in effect constitutes an invisible but a very tangible border as there has been no formal demarcation of it. The mines have caused many civilian deaths and continue to do so. There have also been incidents of people being shot at the Tajik-Uzbek border as well as a series of alleged espionage scandals. The posturing at the border along with the discourse of danger is part of the 'work' of performing state sovereignty whereby the spatial and moral boundary is drawn between the self located on the safe, stable and peaceful inside and the other situated within the dangerous, volatile and violent outside (Megoran, 2004; Aalto, 2003). In Chapter 5 of this thesis I look at another case of spatial sovereignty performance through the case of the dispute concerning the mechanisms of water distribution for energy production and agricultural uses across the border. This is a case of complex dependencies existing between the two states that

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<sup>13</sup> On 16 February 1999, six bombs exploded in Tashkent, killing sixteen people and injuring more than one hundred. The attack, which targeted key government buildings, apparently was an assassination attempt on the president and members of the cabinet of ministers. Very soon after the attack it was announced that the militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), under the leadership of Tohir Yuldash, and Juma Namangani were responsible for the explosions. Later, the Uzbek authorities expanded their list of suspects to include Muhammad Solih, leader of the opposition Erk (Freedom) Party, who has lived in exile since 1993. All three men were accused of conspiring to forcibly take over the government (Rashid 2002: 149-150).

come into conflict with the demands of sovereignisation and nationalisation of the new states and their increased integration into the global markets.

In a way, this dissertation contributes to the discussions of Tajik/Uzbek divide. However, the differences between the two are not seen as inevitable consequences of essentialised ancient identities. This study of sovereignty in post-Soviet Central Asia is focused on the Tajik-Uzbek interactions because it is within such ‘encounters’ that ‘identity’ is spoken of in the most radical terms. Such articulations of ‘identity’ in respect to ‘national interests’ and ‘security’ concerns provide us with the necessary insights into the location of the legitimate authority and the sources of the claim to the right to existence as an independent state, as understood by the local actors. In the attempt to understand how these two states’ representatives have been asserting their country’s sovereignty, the thesis looks at how sovereignty is performed, impersonated and embodied by the people claiming to speak on behalf the state. Sovereignty is thus made real through discourses and practices of state’s ‘spokespeople’.

### **‘Exceptional’ politics: dealing with independence, asserting sovereignty**

The Central Asian states present a curious case of decolonisation that was imposed from the metropolis rather than fought for and won by the nationalist liberation forces in the periphery. It has therefore become somewhat of a conventional wisdom in Western scholarship and popular accounts of Central Asian states’ independence to emphasise their unpreparedness for independent statehood, particularly in case of Tajikistan (Olcott, 1996: 120-128; Rubin, 1994: 18; Horsman, 1999: 37; Olimov & Bushkov, 1998: 20). However, as I have argued elsewhere (Suyarkulova in Cummings & Hinnebusch, forthcoming), Central Asian states were not completely devoid of agency in the process of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The conceptions of ‘sovereignty’ advocated by the region’s elites were aligned with the more conservative, pro-Union forces within the Soviet political scene in the last years of *perestroika*. Immediately before the dissolution of the USSR the exact meaning of “sovereignty” was negotiated between Moscow and the union republics as well as within the Russian Federation itself. The many different uses of the word in the political discourse during that period

included among others: sovereignty as decentralisation and greater autonomy; as a right to positive affirmation of federal legislation; as a right to pre-emptive legislation; fiscal autonomy; a 'single channel' tax system; property claims; other forms of 'economic sovereignty'; a right to negotiate bilateral power-sharing treaties with the federal government; a right to determine collective powers delegated to the federal government; a unilateral right to determine powers delegated to the federal government; a right to secession in accordance with federal law; a unilateral right of secession; as recognition of being 'a subject of international law'; full independence under international law'; freedom of action for independent state (Walker, 2003: 7).

In Central Asia, 'sovereignty' was cautiously used in the more acceptable sense of greater autonomy in the matters of local, cultural, economic, and environmental management, although some voices within oppositional parties spoke of full independence (Suyarkulova, forthcoming). The meanings of 'sovereignty' were in a constant flux within the last years of the existence of the USSR. For example, after the failed coup attempt in August 1991 there was no going back to the meaning of sovereignty agreed upon before and stakes were raised to radicalise the definition. This period was characterised by 'multiple sovereignties'. Central Asian republics started insisting on a looser version of the USSR, debating the differences between a 'union state' and a 'union of states', between a federation and a confederation – all these subtle differences obscuring the meaning of 'sovereignty' within the union even further. For example, Kyrgyzstani president Askar Akayev was advocating for the future union to be a 'synthesis of all the principles of both federalism and confederalism', which should be possible to adopt 'on the principle of community' like that found in Europe, possibly styled after the British Commonwealth (Zherebenkov 1991, August 26).

In sum, to say that Central Asian states were 'catapulted' into independence, or became sovereign 'by default' (Olcott 1992, 1998) is to underestimate the degree of agency that Central Asians had in the process of negotiating greater autonomy from the 'Centre'. Such narratives of the Central Asian states' path to independence subtly undermine their right to existence; deny their claim to subject-hood within the international system. Such discourse is carried on into the post-independence era, when the Central Asian states' sovereignty is discussed in terms of deficiency, departure from the ideal-

form, precariousness and immaturity. It is often asserted that the region's states were not prepared for independence, that they lack the objective trapping of sovereignty, that they are marked by 'Soviet legacy' of incongruence between 'identity' and political boundaries (Glenn 1999). These accounts are consistent with the Sovietological notions of the all-powerful 'Centre' and the conception of the USSR as an evil empire that was at once a 'prison of nation' and a malevolent manufacturer of nations 'to make independent statehood' impossible (see Chapter 3).

It has become common to view the post-independence politics in Central Asia in terms of competing 'levels' of identity. A common 'national' identity is normatively upheld as the desired outcome of state-building project (Akbarzadeh, 1996). The national identity, however, in such analyses has to compete with sub-national and supra-national identities (Glenn, 1999). It is agreed that the Soviet project of nation-building in Central Asia has largely failed and the persistence of alternative regional, 'tribal', or 'clan' identities is cited as a proof of that (Edgar, 2004; Schatz, 2005; Collins, 2006). Thus, Kathleen Collins, for example explains politics in Central Asia in terms of 'clan politics', understood as "politics organised by and around informal identity networks commonly known as clans", whereby people "strongly identify with their local clan networks, not with parties, not with ethnic groups, and certainly not with either the democratic opposition or the state" (Collins, 2006: 1). Politics in Central Asia, therefore, stands in opposition to 'normal' politics driven by 'real' issues debated within anonymous institutions of party politics, and civil movements. The politics of 'tribalism', 'clanism', 'regionalism', 'ethnic animosity' or any other 'identity politics' (such as 'pan-Islamism' or 'pan-Turkism'), on the other hand, function within the logic of assumed cultural loyalty taking precedence over 'real' political issues. Central Asia is found within the zone of permanent 'state of exception', as is the rest of non-Western world (Agamben, 2005; also, see discussion on post-colonial sovereignty in Chapter 2).

In the case of Tajik-Uzbek relations the 'exceptional politics' discourse merges the narratives of 'regionalism', 'clanism', 'localism' [*mestnichstvo* (Rus); *mahalgaroi* (Taj); *mahallachilik* (Uzb)] with 'ethnic animosity' superimposed onto the 'regional', 'tribal', and 'clan' identity. The inter-Tajik conflict is analysed in terms of regionalism and ethnic animosity, rather than as a real ideological struggle over the optimal form of

government. The period between 1989 and 1991 was probably the highest point of political pluralism in Central Asia. However, the democratic aspirations of the Central Asian people are subsumed under the discourse of 'identity politics'.

This kind of explanations of Central Asian politics is objectionable for many reasons. First of all, they are based on the stereotype of some societies as primitive, backward, and irrational, and therefore found in the global 'state of exception'. Second, the references to ancient (or modern) clan, tribal or ethnic animosities do not in fact explain anything. They present us with a theoretical dead-end in that they cannot account for how conflicts actually arise, escalate and are resolved or how 'normal', everyday politics function in Central Asia. Finally, they present an essentialised and a static concept of identity, implying that 'identity groups' constitute coherent entities, acting out of 'objective' self-interests in pursuit of power and access to resources (on personification of political entities read in Chapter 2).

## **Structure of the dissertation**

This dissertation is organised both chronologically and thematically. Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework of the present enquiry as well as discusses the methodological approach of this study. Chapters 3 and 4 present a historical narrative of two periods of state-creation in Central Asia, focusing on the joint emergence of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Chapter 4 examines history-writing as a dialogic state-building practice before and after independence. Chapter 5 then switches from the historical dimension of the study to the analysis of geopolitical articulations of sovereignty through a case study of a controversy surrounding the construction of the Roghun hydropower plant in Tajikistan.

Chapter 2 of this dissertation explores theoretical meanings of sovereignty, its applications to the colonial and post-colonial statehood, and applicability of those conceptions to the post-Soviet states. Based on the ideas of Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard and Cynthia Weber, I offer a metaphor for sovereignty based on the topological shape of a Möbius strip, a paradoxical one-sided surface with only one

boundary folding in on itself. The second chapter further discusses the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the dissertation through the discussion of the methodology of the enquiry that has led to its production. The method of discourse analysis is discussed in brief. This dissertation uses a combination of various discourse analytic tools. The central philosophy of the enquiry is to explore relations between two states through their interaction rather than a one-sided process of representation of the self (usually a more powerful actor/group of actors) in relation and opposition to the other (usually the weaker one). The method used in this thesis is a dialogic approach of analysing 'discursive encounters' between actors speaking on behalf of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. As part of the process of discursive encounter analysis (DEA) such methods as metaphor, narrative and predicate analysis, as well as dialogical analysis were utilised.

The rationale behind the choice of the combination of these methods is that any identity construction is found in the social dialogic process of negotiation and sanctions of the competing narratives of the self, which depend heavily on reception and acceptance by the 'audience'/the other. The construction of the self depends on the successful use of discursive strategies which allow the speaker to advance a desired identity for themselves and resist the negative, undesired constructions offered by others. This explains why the same events are talked of differently by different actors, and also why the same actors may choose to narrate the same events differently in different contexts.

The methodology appendix further offers the 'narrative' of the research process by disclosing the personal connection of the author to the subject matter, the fieldwork encounters and why the particular case studies were chosen. The use of autoethnography as a means of more transparent and self-aware authoring is suggested as a potentially productive way for understanding the International Relations scholarship has been constructed through a combination of institutional arrangements, norms and expectations and the unique experiences of each researcher.

The third chapter provides a narrative of the emergence of the current states of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in 1920-1930s. Far from a comprehensive account of the region's history, this chapter is a brief overview of the diverse, hybrid and ambiguous

identities from tsarist Russia's colonisation of the region till the emergence of independent states of Central Asia in 1991. The complex intertwining of history of Persian and Turkic speaking peoples in the region, the imperial encounter and the Soviet state and nation-making endeavour of the Marxist 'civilising mission' provide the context for all post-independence interactions between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. If one were to use the body metaphor, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were born in their current borders in 1920s as conjoined twins. The twins were separated in 1924 with the promotion of Tajikistan to the SSR status. However, the 'birth trauma' and the pain of separation has left the Tajik state crippled by the longing for the lost territories ("phantom limb" syndrome), perceived as the 'heart' of regional Persian culture and symbolic of past glory, sovereignty and heritage of statehood.

The purpose of the chapter is not to provide the 'correct' version of history of the region and the peoples populating it, but to explore the ambiguity, hybridity and multiplicity of identities behind the labels of Tajik and Uzbek. The goal here is the problematisation of the facile labels justifying the existence of titular states containing eponymous peoples defined in terms of ethnicity. It is the ambiguity of where the 'Tajik' identity ends and 'Uzbek' one begins that is behind the discursive encounters discussed in Chapters Four and Five. In the Möbius strip of identity/difference to be Uzbek means not to be Tajik and vice versa, but there is no ultimate signified on the other side of the ribbon, as there is no other side. The background provided in this chapter is essential for understanding the discursive encounter analysis undertaken in the following chapter.

The fourth chapter presents the first case study, the discursive encounter around historical narratives produced by actors speaking on behalf of the nation and state in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Historiography is understood here as the process of self-identity construction by historians, politicians and 'lay' people through narrative of nation and statehood. This process is akin to 'biographical narratives' by means of which people construct a coherent and continuous sense of self. Various texts, including history textbooks, official speeches, as well as monuments, images, and internet fora are analysed within dialogical framework to see how competing narratives are advanced by various actors to make statements about the racial supremacy and cultural superiority, make territorial claims and to justify the very right to existence of the current nation-

states. Various repertoires and discursive dialogic strategies are utilised to assert one's claim to sovereignty in its territorial, existential and moral dimensions. We find, therefore, that the narrative of Tajik history deeply depends on the Uzbek other for the construction of the self and vice versa. The two narratives are in constant dialogue and the process of negotiation whereby each actor's goal is to present an optimal representation of their social self to the interlocutor and other possible audiences, to justify one's actions, and to resist negative representations of the self by others. While Tajikistan's history is essentially a history of an imagined ethnic community, Uzbekistan's historical narrative is based on the attachment to a particular territory, defined by the boundaries created in the 1920-30s delimitation of the Soviet Socialist republics. These two radical narratives of the same events, peoples and territories illustrate differing sources of sovereignty in the two states, irreconcilable on the current terms of discourse, yet fundamentally interdependent.

The fifth chapter shifts our attention from the temporal (narrative identity over time) to spatial (geopolitics of water use) articulation of sovereignty in Tajik-Uzbek dialogic interactions. In that chapter we look at the ongoing controversy between Tajik and Uzbek governments and expert communities over the plans of the Tajik government to resume the construction of the Roghun hydropower project (HPP) on the Vakhsh River, to which the Uzbek government vehemently objects. This case study examines concrete dialogic strategies and moves that each side's actors take to assert their sovereignty. Despite it being called 'discursive encounter analysis', there is an important aspect of interaction implied in the concept of 'dialogic' identity construction. Both sides engage in a series of dialogic moves constrained by their overall purpose and general context. Within that dialogue, previous statements of the interlocutors are reflected and the future moves are anticipated. The dialogic moves are accompanied by what I call 'sovereign acts' – moves aimed at asserting sovereignty – which can be manifested in popular mobilisation in protests against the construction of the hydropower plant, sale and purchase of shares, stopping of the railroad traffic of the goods destined for the Roghun and the Tajik Aluminium Plant (TALCO), exchange of diplomatic notes of protests and refusal to attend regional leaders' forum. All these dialogic interactions ultimately pursue three strategic goals. First, they aim to advance a positive representation of the self and negative portrayal of the other. Secondly, they want to



resist the negative portrayal of the self by the other. Finally, they attempt to influence the opinions of relevant onlookers/audiences, to add to their prestige and establish favourable relations of power. Ultimately, each state sees the stake in their debate over Roghun to be their status as sovereign states via notions of territoriality, security and identity.

The final chapter concludes the dissertation by summarising the main findings, discussing theoretical and methodological limitations of the approach taken and exploring potential implications of this thesis for the broader field of International Relations. To conclude, this chapter has introduced briefly the thesis topic and the reasons for choosing it, main research questions and the purpose of the study, summary of the main existing views and conventional wisdoms about the subject and how this thesis engages with these views. The following chapter discusses the main intellectual approaches and methods of analysis employed in this thesis.

## **Chapter Two**

# **Sovereignty as Dialogue**

This chapter presents theoretical and conceptual frameworks guiding the subsequent analysis as well as introduce the methodological approach and overall research design of the study. First, the historical emergence and evolution of the meanings of the concept of 'sovereignty' is introduced briefly. The discussion then progresses into the definition of sovereignty as exception and the analysis of post-colonial sovereignty as the double exception from the international rule of 'real' sovereignty. Second, the "Möbius strip of sovereignty" conceptual framework is presented. Möbius strip is an image and a symbolic representation of this author's idea of sovereignty, which gives a direction to the study and demonstrates the relationships between different constructs investigated here. The conceptual framework seeks to demonstrate the author's own position on the problem and to operationalise the theoretical framework. Third, discourse analysis is introduced and justified as the guiding methodological approach of the study. Methods of predicate, metaphor, and narrative analysis are used in this dissertation in order to demonstrate how sovereignty is spoken about, defended and justified through discourse and practice. Finally, the overall 'discursive encounter' research design based on Lene Hansen's (2006: 73-92) framework is explained.

### ***1. Theoretical framework: Sovereignty as exception***

#### **Ambiguity of the referent object and subject of sovereignty**

Sovereignty is arguably the master-concept of the International Relations theory and is defined by both its centrality and ambiguity (Bartelson, 1995: 13). Indeed, most of the recent scholarly explorations have deplored the obscurity of the concept (see, for instance, Krasner 1999, Prokhovnik 2008). The frustration of political and legal theorists is partly due to the multiple and diverse uses of the term at different historical

junctures and in different geographical locations. The common theoretical impulse therefore is to find a common substance, some glue that would unite and hold together all the various meanings attributed to sovereignty. As Thomas J Biersteker and Cynthia Weber noted there is a tendency “to combine population, territory, authority and recognition – the principal constitutive elements of sovereignty – into a single, unproblematic actor: a sovereign state” (1996: 5). However, a number of scholars of sovereignty pointed out the productivity of such ambiguity and its ideological and political functions (Ashley 1988, Walker 1993, Bartelson 1995, Doty 1996).

It is therefore important to look at how sovereignty has been understood and used throughout centuries in various political and legal contexts while trying to avoid dogmatic impulses to fix the use of the term. Genealogical accounts of the evolution of the term are vital for demonstrating how the formulation of meanings of sovereignty and circumstances of its invocation are inherently political (Onuf 1991, Bartelson 1995, Prokhovnik 2008). Sovereignty should be treated not as some elusive reality behind various imprecise uses, but rather as an argument, as a claim for authority in a political system, as a speech act and a performance aimed at establishing political actors’ existence and agency.

The many definitions emphasise different elements within the bundle of concepts united under the title of ‘sovereignty’. Most scholars examining the concept have combined two main aspects of sovereignty in their definitions. On the one hand, sovereignty is the ultimate authority to claim the coercive power *within* a given territory and *over* a defined population. On the other, sovereignty is understood as independence *from* coercion exerted by outside forces (e.g. Holsti, 2004: 113). Sovereignty is thus written from both ‘inside’ and from ‘outside’ (Walker 1993). This is reflected in the theoretical distinction made between ‘internal’ and “external’ sovereignty. Stephen Krasner, however, differentiates between four types of sovereignty: international legal sovereignty (the principle that international recognition should be accorded only to juridically independent sovereign states); Westphalian sovereignty (the principle that states have the right to exclude external authority from their own territory); domestic sovereignty (the actual effective exercise of control over the domestic territory and command of authority and legitimacy over the population); and interdependence sovereignty (the capacity of the state to regulate movements of

capital and people across the border) (1999: 9-25). Such differentiation indicates the difference between international norms recognition and non-interference into internal affairs and the actual exercise of control and power within a territorial state.

There still exists a disagreement among legal scholars, political scientists and politicians whether sovereignty of a state should be declarative and thus based on the act of proclaiming a state or whether it should be grounded in the existence of a government within a given territory pursuant to a community of people. Historically, however, the act of recognition or non-recognition of a state has been based not in an exact science but determined by political and diplomatic considerations. Sovereignty is 'spoken' and performed from the inside, but it has to be asserted by the speech-acts of external recognition and performances of 'international relations'.

In the Montevideo Convention of 1933, for example, sovereignty of the states is assumed to exist prior to and independent of international recognition. Independence of the states is found in a set of 'marks'. Thus, Article 1 of the Convention states that "the state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states". It is not clear, however, whether the capacity of a state to enter into relations with other states is measured by some objective criteria. The capacity of a state to participate in international relations is dependent on other states' recognition of the state in question as a 'person of international law'. However, Article 3 of the same convention asserts that "the political existence of the state is independent of recognition by the other states" and that "even before recognition the state has the right to defend its integrity and independence, to provide for its conservation and prosperity, and consequently to organize itself as it sees fit, to legislate upon its interests, administer its services, and to define the jurisdiction and competence of its courts". Therefore, there seems to be a contradiction between the qualification (d) of Article 1 and Article 3, because the assertion of internal sovereignty which is prior to international recognition does not entail the capacity to enter into international relations, which is necessarily premised on such recognition. In other words, the paradox of the positivist conception of international legal sovereignty is found in the impossibility to meet the 'objective' criteria for international legal personhood outside of the social context of international relations. Sovereign states'

existence is mutually reinforced by the speech-acts of recognition and performances of 'international relations'.

Ultimately, the authority and power to rule over a defined geographic area rests on a political fact for which no purely legal explanation can be provided, and only metaphysical claims can be made. When Jean Bodin first formally used the term 'sovereignty' in 1576, he defined the term as "the absolute and perpetual power of a commonwealth" (Franklin, 1992: 1). The sovereign power was originally understood to be vested in God, and represented on Earth in "a sovereign prince" who was "only accountable to God" (Franklin, 1992: 4). This notion of a monarch as a representation of a transcendental sovereignty has theological roots. The crown was seen as the symbol of permanence of sovereignty, which guarantees continuity of state power regardless of the changes in kings and dynasties. The mortal body of the king was an embodiment of the eternal body of a sovereign *body politic* (Bartelson, 1995: 98). This idea was an echo of the doctrine of the Church as the *corpus mysticum*<sup>1</sup> of Christ himself (Kantorowicz, 1997: 206-7).

Jean Bodin lists ten true marks of sovereignty. According to him, a true sovereign has the sole authority:

- 1) To give laws and change them at will (without consent of the subjects);
- 2) To wage war against opponents or enemies of the state;
- 3) To appoint the highest officials of the state only at its own will;
- 4) To have the last judgement in legal disputes and thus also power to pardon and grant freedom to prisoners irrespective of the law;
- 5) To coin and validate money within the state;
- 6) To impose tax on subjects or to delegate that right to officials or lesser lords;
- 7) To confiscate land and assets;
- 8) To use a royal seal to validate and authorise;
- 9) To change the language of this subjects;
- 10) To reserve the exclusive right for himself to bear the title of 'majesty' (Bodin, 1992: 46-98).

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<sup>1</sup> Kantorowicz (1997:209) also notes that the term *corpus mysticum* was used synonymously with *corpus fictum*, *corpus imaginatum* and *corpus repraesentatum* in the legal organological doctrine of legal persons as corporations conceived of as 'bod[ies] composed of head and members'.

Bodin's marks of sovereignty are in fact the indications of the authority of a sovereign to suspend application of the rule, to make an exception. The prerogative of a sovereign to wage war and make peace, to grant and confiscate property is derivative of the status of the ultimate decision-making power. As Schmitt notes, the essence of sovereignty is "not ... the monopoly to coerce or to rule, but ... the monopoly to decide" (2005: 13). Such monopoly of decision-making in extreme cases means the authority to decide that there exists a state of emergency and to declare it, thus simultaneously suspending the normal constitutional order.

The decision on the state of exception in itself is a performance, often taking the form of a speech-act. All of the above marks of sovereignty are indeed speech-acts (such as giving and changing laws, declaring wars, appointing officials, passing judgement, granting pardon, et cetera) or 'performative utterances' (Austin, 1962: 5), through which sovereignty of a ruler becomes apparent and is at the same time constituted. As Hansen and Stepputat well put it:

What is implicit but never spelled out in Bodin's text is that sovereignty is an *affect* of these actions, and that sovereignty needs to be *performed* and reiterated on a daily basis in order to be effective, and to form the basic referent of the state. (Hansen and Stepputat, 2005: 7. Emphasis is as in the original).

Thus, the traditional and charismatic power of a king was performed ritualistically by both the king and his subjects. This power was legitimised by reference to some extra-social, pre-political authority such as God, nature or some mythical foundational event. As soon as the performative cycle was broken down and the source of authority doubted, the power of the sovereign disintegrated.

The French Revolution of 1789 quite literally removed the crown, together with the head of the king, and secularised the notion of sovereignty. From then on, sovereignty has been thought of as originating in the collective will of 'the people'. Modern conceptions of sovereignty therefore presuppose some form of *popular sovereignty*, i.e. a form of a representational government (Canovan 2005). The sovereign king or queen anointed by the Church as the representative of God's sovereignty on Earth has been replaced in the modern discourse with the concept of 'social contract' (Prokhovnik, 2008: 79). 'The people' in its turn has been variously defined as citizenry, ruling class, regime, or nation. However, the paradox of popular sovereignty is found in the very

constitution of the subject and the referent object of sovereignty --‘the people’ -- as represented in the state, embodied and impersonated by its leaders. Slavoj Žižek, describes this transition in ideological construction of sovereignty arguing that in the modern state,

the totalitarian Leader ... no longer needs this external point of reference to legitimise his rule. ... Here the basic deception consists in the fact that the Leader’s point of reference, the instance to which he is referring to legitimise his rule (the People, the Class, the Nation) *does not exist* – or, more precisely, exists only through and in its fetishistic representative, the Party and its Leader (Žižek, 1989: 146, emphasis in the original).

In the modern state the sovereign power is ‘imagined’ and ‘produced’ by performative mutual embodiment and impersonation of ‘the People’ (mostly defined as ‘the Nation’) through the government.

A conceptual legal and political connection forged between the body politic and *territorial sovereignty* culminated in the so-called Westphalian state system (Murphy, 1996: 86). Romantic visions of nationalism that started to emerge in the post-Napoleonic world brought about a strong political ideology, which was premised on an almost sacred connection between the people and the land (the emotive labels of ‘homeland’, ‘motherland’ or ‘fatherland’ replaced the designations such as the ‘realm’ and ‘commonwealth’). With the rise of nationalism as the dominant popular basis for sovereignty, the organismic and familial metaphors of state and the nation proliferated (Smith, 1991: 76). Following the body metaphor a sovereign entity was conceived as corporeality with an obvious inside and outside (Walker 1993, Holsti 2004).

This system crystallised around the same time as European empires started to emerge – the fact closely related to emergence of conceptions of state sovereignty as reflection of legitimate international legal personhood (Prokhovnik, 2008: 82). European colonisation was justified by liberal ideas that compared a sovereign individual to the state (Hansen and Stepputat, 2005: 9). The international legal doctrine of sovereignty therefore emerged out of “the colonial encounter” as a result of the efforts by imperial legal scholars to come to terms with cultural differences (Anghie, 2004: 2-3). The colonised peoples and lands were excluded from humanity and denied personhood completely and, therefore, sovereignty in the early system of colonial imperialism. In the later stages, they were assigned a status of a ‘child’ within the mandate system

according to their perceived relative degree of development (Lyons and Mastanduno, 1005: 6-7; Strang, 1996: 24). The postcolonial sovereignty is still often metaphorically conceived of as 'adolescent' (Doty 1996).

### **Post-colonial sovereignty as the state of exception**

The central issues of concern in the study of sovereignty during the past decades were formulated in terms of whether or not the dogma of state sovereignty was rendered obsolete by the processes of globalisation and the competing norms of human rights, democratisation and human security (Lyons and Mastanduno 1995, Evans and Sahnoun 2001, Bickerton et al. 2007). This body of literature is related to the post-World War and post-Cold War concern with post-colonial sovereignty, and the attempts to come to terms with the challenges to statehood in the so-called Third World (Jackson 1990, Anghie 2004, Doty 1996, Hansen and Stepputat 2005, Gravagui 1996). It is generally agreed that sovereignty requires not just the legal right to exercise supreme power, but the actual exercise of such power as well. There can be no *de jure* sovereignty without *de facto* exercise of it. In other words, neither claiming sovereignty (or being proclaimed sovereign) nor merely exercising sovereign power is sufficient. In the case of post-colonial states, however, the sovereignty doctrine of the international law has taken up "unique forms which differed from and destabilised given notions of European sovereignty" (Anghie, 2004: 6).

A seminal work in this regard was the 1990 book by Robert Jackson entitled *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World*, in which he argues that the states created as a result of decolonisation lacked empirical statehood and were brought into existence only thanks to the will of the international community to assert a sort of affirmative action when it came to recognising the post-colonial states. The Third World "quasi-states" thus possess what Jackson calls "negative sovereignty" as opposed to the European "positive sovereignty".

Other scholars also grappled with incongruence of the ideal of sovereignty with international practice. Hinsley's 'ineffective states' (1986), James's 'permeable states' (1986), Buzan's 'weak state' (1991) are all attempts to classify states within the



international system according to the variance in the degree of sovereignty. Third World states' sovereignty is still viewed as deficient and their statehood as precarious. Such terms as "collapsed", "failed" and "fragile" all reflect the perception of a deficient and incomplete nature of the post-colonial states' sovereignties and statehoods.

The usual narrative in historiography of statehood tells us that the Westphalian system based on the idea of territorial sovereignty emerged in Europe and then spread across the world, first as a result of imperialism, and subsequently replicated in the post-colonial world. However, according to Antony Anghie, far from preceding the colonisation of the various peoples in Asia, Africa and South America, the sovereignty doctrine arose out of the colonial encounter (2004: 2-3). It was a means for the colonisers to justify their conquests and domination of the colonised peoples through the discourse of cultural difference, which resulted in the articulation of the "civilising mission" doctrine. Tracing the emergence of sovereignty doctrine in the discipline of international law, Anghie surveys key sources on international law at the turning points of the history of colonialism. His analysis leads him to unexpected conclusions. Sovereignty, which is normally perceived as a universal, empowering and positive institution in international relations has in fact arguably been used to delegitimise the non-European forms of sovereignty and therefore their claims for authority within their territory and independence from foreign imperial domination (Strang, 1996: 25).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the norm of sovereign equality was codified in the UN Charter, guaranteeing equal status to all member-states, regardless of their size, relative power or wealth. This norm, despite its liberating potential, arguably has a flipside. It became, according to postcolonial legal scholars, a means of erasure of the colonial past and attribution of responsibility for the internal problems to the newly sovereign states. The unique vulnerability and dependence of the post-colonial states' sovereignty on the system of the international law built into it by the colonial encounter, however, continues to persist despite the declared sovereign equality of all states (Blaney and Inayatullah, 1996: 84-5). Thus, Ferguson argues that the language of 'sovereignty' depoliticises global division of labour and poverty in postcolonial states. Designation of postcolonial states as 'sovereign' (and therefore independent) allows to frame poverty as the 'national' concern, while the past of exploitation and persisting global patterns of inequality can be erased (Ferguson 1997).

Apart from postcolonial critique of 'sovereignty', constructivist and poststructuralist scholars of International Relations problematised the concept in their writing over the past two decades. R.B. J. Walker addressed the problem of sovereignty in the so-called Third World, arguing that sovereignty is not something that states *have*, but rather something that states *do* (Walker, 1996: 16). This performative quality of sovereignty is also reflected in Cynthia Weber's (1995) work, in which she examines how sovereignty is practically constituted in activities and discourses of the state actors. She focuses on how the meaning of sovereignty is stabilized by analysing a particular political practice – intervention. In order to do so, she examines three instances of intervention during different time periods to demonstrate the contingency of the meaning attached to sovereignty at different points in time. In each case, Weber demonstrates how re-articulations of what constitutes the proper locus of sovereign power and the boundaries of the intervening political community help legitimate the intervention. She argues that sovereignty and intervention are mutually constitutive. Although intervention is commonly understood to be a negative term, because it refers to a violation of sovereignty, its use fixes the meaning of sovereignty in a particular location of time and space, because it presupposes the knowledge of what lies within the legitimately monopolised powers and authorities of a state, where the boundaries of a state should be drawn, who belongs to that particular political community and who does not. Therefore, the language of justifications of an intervention or protestation against it, serves to stabilise sovereign nation-statehood. Intervention is an alibi for sovereignty and sovereignty in its turn is an alibi for "domestic community" in whose name it is claimed (Weber, 1995: 27, 128). In Weber's opinion, "there is no "natural" sovereign state because there is no "natural" foundation of sovereignty" (1995: 27).

Following Cynthia Weber's exploration of variation of the meaning sovereignty/intervention, Helle Malmvig's book (2006) argues that space is also an important component of sovereignty discourse and practice (Malmvig, 2006: 2). Some places are imagined as less sovereign as well as 'backward' in their temporal location (somewhere in the 'state of nature'). Her case studies of the intervention in Kosovo, (where the events were constructed as within the concerns of international community), and non-intervention in Algeria (where they were framed exclusively as an

internal affair of the state), demonstrate that sovereignty was questionable in the latter case and therefore it had to be asserted by non-intervention:

When politicians and others were invoking Algerian sovereignty, they were, at one and the same time, referring to sovereignty as a given, and yet recognising that sovereignty no longer resided within the obvious and non-political. Sovereignty was something that needed to be emphasised and demonstrated. ... Politicians were therefore caught in a paradoxical practice, where they simultaneously constituted sovereignty as something given and natural, and as something contested and political (Malmvig, 2006: 39).

Thus, postcolonial states are portrayed as both spatially and temporally removed from the sovereign 'norm'. Doty writes that sovereignty of the states in the global South is generally represented as 'adolescent' (1996: 87-89). States as 'mature' and 'adolescent' entities is a logical extension of the metaphor of 'state as a person' and the general narrative of state sovereignty as a process originating in the mythical 'state of nature'. 'Backwardness' can also serve as a reference to the temporal dislocation into the past, to the archaic forms of governance from the Euro-centric point of reference.

The echo of the 'state of nature' thesis is found in the 'state of exception', first discussed by Carl Schmitt (2005). The ability to declare temporary suspension of normal politics, according to Schmitt's thesis, is the true and only measure of sovereignty: "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception" (Schmitt, 2005: 5). The state of emergency within which the rule of the exceptional politics is established is a momentary return to the state of nature and the very instance of the original assertion of sovereign power. Civil war is usually seen as such return to the state of nature. That is why the states that are experiencing or recently experienced a civil war are conceptualised as 'failed', or lacking in internal sovereignty. Giorgio Agamben writes of modern emergency politics as "a legal civil war" (2005: 2).

Post-colonial sovereignties, therefore, could be imagined as being in a permanent 'state of emergency'. Conversely, the entire region of the global South is treated by the international community as "almost permanent zones of exception" confirming the rule of Westphalian sovereignty (Hansen and Stepputat, 2005: 18). This double exception of the 'quasi-states' from the rule of sovereignty is reflected in the modes of thinking of and describing of post-colonial states as 'characterised by disorder, chaos, corruption, and general ineptitude', thus assigning them a lesser degree of agency and hierarchically positioning the states of the global North as more 'mature' and

‘responsible’ (Doty 1996: 42). Doty continues, “many of the earlier colonial stereotypes are present in the real state/quasi-state opposition: inability to handle power and authority responsibly and humanely, incapacity for self-government, general incompetence” (Doty 1996: 152). The discourse of ‘failed’ or ‘quasi’-states therefore creates not only temporal and spatial zones of exception, but also moral geographies of superiority/inferiority, order/chaos, rule of law/corruption, and so on.

To sum up, sovereignty as a concept is fundamental to international relations theory in establishing the spheres of the domestic and foreign, order and chaos, and hierarchy of power relations. Rather than being a reflection of ‘how things are’, sovereignty is a social construct. It has largely evolved as an international law concept through the colonial encounters of the European states with what later became ‘Third World’ or ‘Global South’, and is an inherently political concept, rather than a natural and apolitical category. While legal sovereign equality of all states is assumed, postcolonial sovereignty is still conceptualised in both political and scholarly discourse as a type of a deviation, or an exception from the rule of ‘positive’ sovereignty. Therefore, not only is the sovereignty of post-colonial states constructed as different from that of the First World states, but their deficient and precarious sovereignty destabilises the supposed absolute nature of idealised standard of sovereignty found in ‘the West’. The post-colonial state is thus represented as pregnant with both “peril” (‘they are not like us’) and “promise” (‘they might eventually become like us’).

## ***2. Conceptual framework: Möbius strip of sovereignty***

At the age of about twelve I read a short story by Martin Gardner called “The no-sided professor” (Gardner 1987). The premise of the story was based on a curious topological figure called the Möbius strip and its amazing quality of having only one side and one edge. A professor of topology in the story presents his discovery that logically follows from the properties of the Möbius strip – it is possible not only to conceive but actually construct a ‘zero-sided’ figure. The eccentric scientist then in an extraordinary feat of yogic flexibility bends his own body into the required shape and ... disappears.

A Möbius band is created by twisting a strip of paper by half a turn and gluing the two ends together. If you try to draw a line on one side of the band, your pencil will return

to the starting point without having to go over the edge. If you were to cut the band in the middle, rather than end up with two separate rings of paper you will have a single loop with a full twist. This possibility of a one-sided and single-edged surface contradicts the principles of Euclidian geometry that most of us learn at school.

The image and idea of the Möbius strip occurred to me, as a postgraduate student, as a useful way to conceptualise and visualise my thoughts on sovereignty. I propose it as a metaphor to guide our thinking on sovereignty as a concept of international relations theory, which seems to establish the realms of internal and external, presence and absence, identity and difference, while in fact these apparent dichotomies are part of a Möbius loop of Derrida's *différance* (1982).<sup>2</sup>

In her study of the United States' politics of representation in relation to the Philippines, Roxanne Lynn Doty argues that sovereignty is essentially a 'floating signifier whose meaning is always deferred' (1996: 96). "This is most obvious in instances of 'third-world' sovereignty", she writes, "where any stable and decidable signified for sovereignty are conspicuously absent and the signifier sovereignty floats, unanchored" (Doty, 1996: 96). Here Doty refers to Derrida's concept of *différance* to suggest that meanings of words rely on *differentiation* from the words with opposite meanings and at the same time on *deferral*, "putting off of the encounter with the missing presence that the sign is presumed to be moving toward" (Doty, 1996: 6). This continuous circulation of signs where the meaning is constantly deferred "by means of a systemic play of differences" (Derrida, 1982: 11) might suggest us that those signs ultimately refer to nothing and that they are indeed "empty signifiers". The sign of sovereignty acts as the central one in the chain of signification. It is a sign to which all the other signs such as 'authority', 'power', 'legitimacy', and 'the people' are supposed to ultimately refer back to. The Möbian conception of sovereignty refers to the circulation of signifiers that metonymically become substituted for one another, creating an illusion of difference while indefinitely deferring the encounter with the

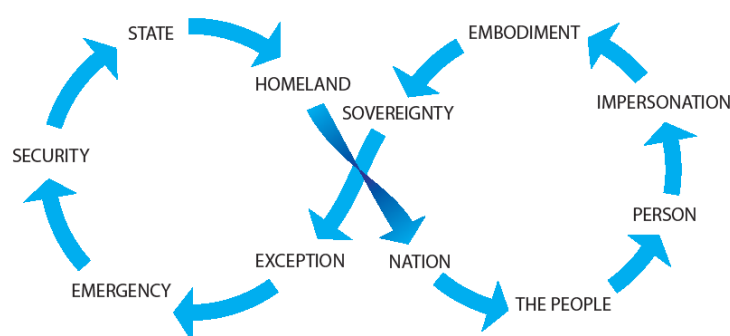
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<sup>2</sup>*Différance* is a 'neographism' introduced by Jacques Derrida, which incorporates both 'difference' and 'deference' in French spelling. It is the notion that words and signs can never fully summon forth what they mean, but can only be defined through appeal to additional words, from which they differ. Thus, meaning is forever "deferred" or postponed through an endless chain of signifiers. Looking a word up in a dictionary is an example of *différance*. If you were to look up all the words that make up the definition of the original word, and then all the words contained in the following definitions, the process of differentiation and deferral of meaning would be endless.

final meaning and distancing us from the initial master-signifier<sup>3</sup> thus allowing the illusion of double-sidedness where there is none.

Baudrillard uses the metaphor of the Möbius strip in his *Simulacra and Simulation* to illustrate how the logic of simulation works by “subtle, maleficent, elusive twisting of meaning”, which “does not necessarily result in despairing of meaning, but just as much in improvisation of meaning, of non-meaning, of many simultaneous meanings that destroy each other” (1994: 16-40). In other words, proliferation of signs, which appear to substitute one another metonymically, destabilises the meaning of words. In the procession of simulacra, we move from a sign as (1) a “reflection of a profound reality” to (2) an image that “masks and denatures a profound reality” to the one that (3) “masks the *absence* of a profound reality”, until finally (4) we reach a state whereby signs bear “no relation to any reality whatsoever” and the image is “its own pure simulacrum” (Baudrillard, 1994: 6). I argue that a Möbian conception of sovereignty articulation best illustrates the process whereby signs are circulated and twisted providing ‘alibi’ for an absent master-signifier, be it God, the Nation, or the People.

Figure 2.1. Möbian sovereignty model



The inspiration for this dissertation in large part was provided by Cynthia Weber’s book *Simulating Sovereignty* (1995), which in its turn was inspired by Baudrillard’s work on

<sup>3</sup> Master-signifier is a term, based on the linguistics of Saussure, which belongs to Slavoj Žižek who used it to analyse ideology. It is ‘a signifier without signified’ to which all other signifiers within the chain of signification ultimately refer to (1989:93). Others have used the term ‘empty signifier’ to refer to the same idea. The open-endedness of master-signifier which allows it to be equivalent to multiple other signifiers is also the condition of its contestability, giving rise to political ideological discourse.

simulation and symbolic exchange. According to Weber, global politics have entered the post-representational stage. We no longer know what we mean by “sovereignty” or “intervention”. These terms have become empty, interchangeable and self-referential:

The circulation of hyperreal signifiers as alibis for sovereignty and intervention simulates the sovereignty/intervention boundary. Writing the state in an order of simulation requires simulating the sovereignty/intervention boundary and other boundaries (e.g. domestic/international, inside/outside, citizen/foreigner). ... *Investigating sovereignty, then, requires investigating how states are simulated* (Weber, 1995, 129, emphasis added by me).

‘The logic of simulation’ is meant here not as “organised hypocrisy” (Krasner 1999), as cynical pretence, non-genuine, surrogate to the ‘real’ thing out there. Simulation is interchangeable here with “virtuality”, understood not as “ersatz, the unreal real”, but rather as “neither reality nor unreality”, a state which is sufficient unto itself (Wilson, 2005: 34). Neither does the talk of simulation and virtuality mean that social relations, activities and institutions involved in articulation of sovereignty are completely imaginary phenomena. Rather, sovereignty belongs to the order of ‘hyperreality’, as defined by Baudrillard, “a simulation of something which never really existed” (Baudrillard, 1994: 6).<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the proliferation of ‘sovereign’ state model hides the fact that there does not exist an original authentic sovereign state to refer back to.

This is why I propose to apply Baudrillard’s observation that in modern politics “all referentials combine their discourses in a circular, Möbian compulsion” to the articulation of sovereignty discourses (Baudrillard, 1994: 17-18). A similar thought, I believe, is expressed in Bartelson’s discussion of ‘*parergonality* of sovereignty’, the concept derived from Kant’s idea of ‘parergon’ – a frame, which is at once “a composite of inside and outside” and which is “an outside which is called inside the inside to constitute it as inside” (Bartelson, 1995: 51). Just as a frame of a painting establishes the boundary between the inside and the outside while being part of neither, sovereignty as a concept performs the function of a parergon in international relations, Bartelson argues. *Genealogy of Sovereignty* attempts to establish how sovereignty came

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, a recent episode of the on BBC Three’s popular show *Snog Marry Avoid?* featured a girl from Dewsbury, England, who imitates Japanese style called ‘Gyaru’ (Japanese transliteration of the English word ‘gal’, which in turn originates from a popular jeans brand’s advertising campaign proclaiming “I can’t live without men”), imitating a cartoonish version of a ‘Californian’ girl with makeup simulating tanned skin, bleached blonde hair, wide ‘European’ eyes and narrow nose. A ‘Personal Overhaul Device’ (POD), which is itself a TV simulation of a sarcastic and judgemental computer ‘fighting fakery’ gave the girl a ‘make-under’, which included makeup and hair dying, but which was simulating absence of makeup and restoration of ‘natural beauty’.

to be understood as both empirical (objectively observable) and transcendental (referring to an ultimately unknowable) foundation of the modern state. As he writes, “the juxtaposition of the domestic and the international as we know it today is a fairly recent and essentially modern construct, following from a specific parergonal function attributed to the concept of sovereignty by a likewise specific arrangement of modern knowledge” (Bartelson, 1995: 52). “Without this parergonality of sovereignty”, he writes, “there can be no intelligible talk of the state or anything international, nor any empirical disciplines devoted to the analysis of their finitude” (190).

The theme of the framing quality of sovereignty is continued in the writing of Giorgio Agamben, who discusses the paradoxical condition of sovereign power as located at the same time both “inside and outside a juridical order” (Agamben, 1998: 18). Building on Carl Schmitt’s definition of sovereignty as the authority to decide on the state of exception (2005: 13), Agamben uses set theory to define an exception as an ‘inclusive exclusion’, because while it “cannot be included in the whole of which it is a member and cannot be a member of the whole in which it is always already included” (25). *Homo sacer*, a person who is considered to be outside of law, but at the same time is part of legal-political system that defines its boundaries,<sup>5</sup> is an example of such an inclusive exclusion, his body being the site of the exercise of sovereign power. Agamben concludes that: “The state of exception is thus not so much a spatio-temporal suspension as a complex topological figure in which not only the exception and the rule but also the state of nature and law, outside and inside, pass through one another (Agamben, 1998: 37). The inside, therefore, constitutes outside. Both are part of a single-surfaced Möbian loop.

The designations ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ conceptually come about from individual experience of one’s body in the world. Tuan writes that such orientations as “vertical-horizontal, top-bottom, front-back and right-left are positions and coordinates of the body that are extrapolated onto space” and that correspond to temporal and moral realms of “future-past” and “sacred-profane” (Tuan, 1977: 34-35). Similarly, the

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<sup>5</sup>*Homo sacer* (Latin for the ‘sacred man’ or ‘the accursed man’) in Roman law referred to an oath-breaker, who by breaking the oath (act of cursing oneself) was considered to be at the mercy of gods. Such a person was banned, could be killed by anyone, but could not be sacrificed (Agamben, 1998: 72). In the modern days, the concept can be applied to people who are outside of political and legal order (stateless people, concentration camp detainees).



construction of inside and outside in IR, creates spaces corresponding to self and other, and moral boundaries of order and chaos, civil society and the state of nature. R.B.J Walker in his work *Inside/Outside* demonstrates how the discourses of International Relations theory participate in the construction of the very concepts they claim to explain, sovereignty being the central one. Sovereignty as the main principle of international relations serves to demarcate the borders of a political community, to separate the domestic from the foreign. "To refer to international *relations*", - he writes - "is to suggest that what goes on between states is in principle quite different from what goes on within states" (Walker, 1993: 63, emphasis in the original). Sovereignty thus establishes not only spatial and temporal, but also ethical/moral boundaries, whereby the ethics of the domestic *politics* are inapplicable to the international *relations*. The relationship between International relations as a discipline and sovereignty as its main foundational concept are circularly mutually productive, whereby sovereignty is constructed by international relations theories and international relations theories are only possible with sovereignty as their basis. Walker uses Derrida-style deconstruction of Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes and Max Weber in order to demonstrate by means of historical and interpretive readings of the classical texts that state sovereignty is composed of countless pairs of binary oppositions. The most prominent of these pairs is found in the title of the book – Inside/Outside – and corresponds with other pairs (Self/Other, presence/absence, politics /relations, empirical/normative). They are mutually inter-woven in a ring of Möbius.

Another important point that Walker makes (and which is important for this study) is the assertion of the constructiveness and re-constructability of state as a political institution. This means that states are not permanent fixtures within global system; they are neither already consolidated sovereign states enjoying full "empirical" and "positive" sovereignty nor are they failed "quasi-states" that only survive thanks to juridical or "negative" sovereignty (Jackson 1990). States are 'written' in never-ending daily practices and discourses regarding the proper and legitimate location of power and authority within a society, regarding the boundaries of those societies, and regarding the issues of inclusion and exclusion into the political community. Walker writes:

The state appears in the conventional story as a formal and almost lifeless category, when in fact states are constantly maintained, defended, attacked, reproduced, undermined, and relegitimised on a daily basis. The conventional story combines with a legalistic reading of the state to mystify the minute rituals through which states are constantly made and remade. Again, appeals to state sovereignty serve to maintain the high ground of timelessness (episteme, eternity) against the flux (doxa) of time, and to confirm the existence of the state as something “out there” separate from the ordinary experience of people’s lives (168).

So how exactly are states simulated in practice? The next section of this chapter explains in more detail the methodological approach incorporating theories of language and meaning to the study of sovereignty that this dissertation adapts.

### ***3. Research methods: Sovereignty as utterance and performance***

The choice of research methods in this dissertation is closely related to the qualitative nature of the study that investigates meanings, perceptions, symbols and descriptions. The actors’ behaviour, within given situations, is observed, their interactions are analysed as speech-acts and performative events, and scrutinised for patterns and categories, in order to answer the research questions. The main methodological task was to determine who speaks on behalf of the state and the people and how these acts of impersonation and embodiment of the state help simulate sovereignty and thus the possibility of international relations.

#### **Discourse analysis as approach and method**

Discourse analysis as a methodological approach in IR has been called upon to supersede the representational logic and causal explanations of ‘epistemic realism’ and to substitute it with a non-causal ‘logic of interpretation’ (Campbell, 1998: 4). Within the notion of ‘logic of interpretation’ lies the understanding that phenomena and events are rendered meaningful in human imagination by analyzing the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar. This cognitive process has been labeled as ‘schema’ theory of learning in the study of psychology, or described as metaphorical thinking in linguistic analysis (Lakoff and Johnson 2003). While the traditional approaches assume Saussurean representational logic of the relationship between discursive practices and the ‘real world’, the poststructuralist approach implies moving from the logic of representation,

which assumes presence of a signified behind the signifier, towards the logic of simulation whereby concepts are constituted by a chain of signifiers without an ultimate signified (Cummings, 2009: 1085).

There is no one 'how to' guide to discourse analysis methodology in international relations. Various authors have, therefore, dealt with the pragmatics of conducting their research and data analysis in different and sometimes rather creative ways (Milliken 1999, Hansen 2006, Weber 1995, 2001, Fierke 2005). Most discourse analysis studies in IR tend to concentrate on politics of representation of 'Others' by actors representing 'the West' (Doty 1996, Neumann 1999, Campbell 1998). While such research has been essential for deconstructing the 'common sense' assumptions and exposing the power-knowledge praxis, the 'others' still mostly remain silent and do not 'talk back' (Spivak 1988).

Jennifer Milliken (1999) and Lene Hansen (2006) have attempted to move away from the perception of discourse analysis as 'anti-methodology' and to assert it as a legitimate method of analysis in IR by developing "criteria for and exemplars of different types of discourse studies" (Milliken, 1999: 226). This thesis draws on a number of such examples of discourse analysis methodology as the source for pragmatic 'how to' guidance on undertaking such a study. In particular, I have sought to understand how states are constituted as actors and subjects with authority to speak and act through discourse (Milliken, 1999: 229), how temporal, spatial and ethical boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are drawn, made natural and policed, how the political and the ideological is represented as commonsensical, unavoidable and natural (Hansen, 2006: 19).

Scholars of IR have identified a link between discursive identity construction, notions of state/national interests, perceptions of threat, and foreign policy. Ontologically, states come into being and are maintained through discursive practices of identification and differentiation between self and other. The negative and positive linking of certain places, subjects and ideologies to binary opposites constitute boundaries between the political temporal, spatial and ethical insides and outsides. To 'be' for a state, therefore, is to exist in the discourse of the actors authorised (or claiming authority) to speak and act on its behalf. This 'existence', however, is meaningless without recognition of

relevant Others (audiences, interlocutors). Identities are thus relational, narrative and performative, with the story-telling and performance taking place in 'dialogue' with the other (Bakhtin 1986).

### **Predicate analysis: Us and Them**

Discursive constructions of 'us' and 'them' are the basic building material for the discourses of national identity. Such discourses mainly utilize four types of discursive macro-strategies, namely:

- Constructive – strategies that are aimed at constructing (national) identities;
- Preservative/ justificatory – strategies that are used to preserve or reproduce (national) identities;
- Transformative – strategies that seek to change (national) identities;
- Destructive – discursive strategies that aim to dismantle (national) identities (Wodak in Seale et al, 2004: 205).

For this thesis it was important to observe the constitution and maintenance of national and state identities in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan through examination of the texts produced within the discourses of identity and difference holding the following key questions in mind:

1. How are the persons/actors/groups named and referred to in the texts? What predicates/ epithets accompany the self- and other- group names?
2. What qualities, traits, characteristics and features are attributed to them?
3. What arguments and argumentation strategies are used in order to justify the positive or negative attributions, inclusion or the exclusion of the other?
4. Whose perspective is being expressed (the author's own voice - intentionality)? Who are the author's audience (addressivity)? What are the 'voices that came before' (intertextuality and interdiscursivity)?
5. Are the utterances overtly expressed? Does the author try to mitigate them? Or are they even intensified? Is the text a site of struggle of competing discourses?

What are the traces of competing discourses and ideologies within this text? (206-7).

For instance, construction of positive self- and negative other- representations as found in the works of most prominent Tajik and Uzbek historians, water experts, journalists and politicians were analysed. For this purpose I found the following table, borrowed in its entirety from Ruth Wodak (Table 13.1 in Seale et al, 2004: 207), very useful as a guiding tool.

**Table 2.1. Discursive strategies for positive self- and negative other-representation**

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Devices</b>
<i>Referential /Nomination</i>	Construction of in-groups and out-groups	Membership categorization; biological, naturalizing and depersonalizing; metaphors and metonymies; synecdoche (pars pro toto, totum pro pars)
<i>Predication</i>	Labeling social actors more or less positively or negatively, deprecatorily or appreciatively	Stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits; Implicit and explicit predicates
<i>Argumentation</i>	Justification of positive or negative attributions	Topoi used to justify political inclusion or exclusion, discrimination or preferential treatment
<i>Perspectivation, framing or discourse representation</i>	Expressing involvement; Positioning speaker's point of view	Reporting, description, narration or quotation of events and utterances
<i>Intensification, mitigation</i>	Modifying the epistemic status of a proposition	Intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force of utterances

Therefore in my analysis of texts I looked for patterns and performative speech-acts which established in- and out-groups and described relationship between those groups. I specifically also sought out the open and 'hidden' dialogues, whereby actors on both sides of the discursive boundaries engaged with the arguments, references and implied antagonisms contained in the past and present articulations of identity.

## Metaphor analysis: Personification of the sovereign

Sovereignty is most of the time discussed through metaphors of personification of the state, nation or people, whereby certain (collective) actors come to impersonate and embody the various referents of sovereignty in various contexts. The modern notion that connects 'the people' with a political entity in the container of a nation-state, presupposes unity and continuity of the political people across territorial space and over time. While it is obvious that 'the people' is a collection of individuals, a national community is 'imagined' as a collective body with a shared collective 'memory' or heritage that is passed on between generations.

Many authors have made the simple observation that the sovereignty as a concept "arose in conjunction with the idea of state as a *persona ficta*" (Prokhovnik, 2008: 20). Bodin and Hobbes exploited the metaphor of the state-person in their theorisation of divine and natural origins of the sovereign authority. Like a sovereign rational Renaissance man, the state has often been conceptualised in rather anthropomorphic terms. Perhaps, the most graphic depiction of such a collective person is Hobbes's Leviathan, who is imagined as a giant whose body is a composite of all the citizens' bodies: "The multitude so united in one person, is called a common-wealth. This is the generation of that great Leviathan, or rather (to speak more reverently) of that Mortall God, to which we owe under the Immortall God, our peace and defence" (Hobbes, 1962: 120). It is worth noting here, that the original cover of the *Leviathan* featured an illustration of the collective body politic with its torso and extremities composed of 'the people' and the head being the sovereign king.<sup>6</sup>

Locke and Rousseau in their political philosophies interpreted the meaning of the popular in the social contract quite differently, but both of them formulated their

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<sup>6</sup> A typical account of state as a corporate person is found in John of Salisbury's book *Policraticus*: "The state [*res publica*] is a body [*corpas quoddam*] ... Within that state, the prince ... occupies the place of the head; he is subject to the unique God and to those who are his lieutenants on earth, for in the human body the head is also governed by the soul. The senate occupies the place of the heart, which gives good and bad deeds their impulses. The function of the eyes, the ears and the tongue is assured by the judges and the provincial governors... The "officers" and "soldiers" ... can be compared to the hands. The prince's regular assistants are the flanks. The quaestors [*quaestous* or stewards) and the registrars... evoke the image of the belly and intestines which, if they have been stuffed through excessive greed and if they hold in their contents too obstinately, give rise to countless and incurable illnesses and, through their vices, can bring about the ruin of the body as a whole. The feet that always touch the soil are the peasants" (John of Salisbury 1990, Book VI, Chapter 24).

theories of natural rights based on the analogy between the sovereign state and the sovereign individual (Prokhovnik, 2008: 83). John Locke also talked of the 'body of the people' and the 'head of state', although unlike Hobbes, who was a monarchist, Locke assumed the right of the 'body of people' to rebel against a tyrannical king. This demonstrates that the metaphors involving personification of the state have a great political potential and can be mobilised by forces regardless of their location on the political spectrum. According to Rousseau, at the moment of conclusion of a 'social contract' an artificial collective body composed of all the individuals that make up the community is created, which is then capable of "acting in concert" (Rousseau, 1968: 60). The fiction of a 'social contract', this act of *incorporation*, thus creates a link between the *members* of the state and its head (the sovereign), establishing a *body politic*, a *public person*.

Margaret Canovan (2005) in her exploration of the meanings of the concept of popular sovereignty analyses the evolution of the idea 'the people' with the accompanying personification and corporation metaphor. 'A people' is imagined throughout the centuries as an organic collective body of *res publica* with 'members' which has the potential for collective action, while at the same time 'the people' are simply a aggregation of all the individuals within a political community (Canovan, 2005, 45-6). These are two competing visions or metaphors of 'the people', which correspond to competing theories of nationalism.<sup>7</sup>

Our theories of how the world works are often shaped by metaphors, which transfer a literally inapplicable meaning of one sign onto another, representing an event or a thing through its resemblance to another, unrelated one. For instance, 'society is like an organism' or, 'states are like people' are very common metaphors used in theorising of

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<sup>7</sup> They stem from the binary opposition of Nature versus Artifice as the roots or the essence of a nation. On the one hand we have a Romantic vision of a nation based on ethnicity reflected in the metaphor of the people as a single organism or body, corresponding to the primordialist understandings of the origin and nature of nations (Geertz). On the other hand, the Roman view of the people is based on the civic understanding that 'the people' (*populus*) can be 'built', corresponding to the constructivist theories of nations and nationalism (Anderson, Gellner, Barth). A synthesis of the two competing metaphors of peoplehood/nationhood is found in the ethno-symbolism (Anthony Smith, Hutchinson) which combines nature and artifice. It attempts to reconcile the extreme modernist and primordialist positions by proposing the hypothesis that nationalisms creatively recycle elements of pre-existing group identities and narratives in order to foster a collective sense of belonging to a polity, regardless of the objective validity or accuracy of the narratives upon which the myths of common descent are built. Nations thus are 'real' in effects rather than in essence.

international relations. It is said that ‘metaphor ... touches a deep level of understanding ..., for it points to the process of learning and discovery – to those analogical leaps from the familiar to the unfamiliar which rally imagination and emotion as well as intellect’ (Battimer 1982: 90, quoted in Barnes and Duncan, 1992: 10). In an intriguing way, metaphors provide us not only with seemingly transparent heuristic devices for making sense of the world around us, but also disclose the process of theory formulation and creativity. Metaphors, especially those drawing their comparisons from the natural world have long produced important insights, and lent legitimacy to theories likening social phenomena and processes to the timeless “laws of nature”.

There is a long tradition in Western philosophy beginning with Aristotle to consider metaphors and use of other ‘figures of speech’ as a logical fallacy (Walton, 1996: 172). It is considered that the ambiguity resulting from such creative use of language muddles clear thinking and contradicts the notion of rational thought as literal, conscious, logical, transcendent (disembodied) and dispassionate. Hobbes too wrote in *Leviathan* that ‘when we use words metaphorically; that is in other senses than that they were ordained for; ... [we] thereby deceive others’ (1962: 34). However, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) argue that far from being a fallacy or mere flourish of poetic speech, metaphorical thinking is at the heart of all human reasoning:

Most of ordinary human thought – thought carried out by real “rational animals” – is metaphoric, and hence not literal. It uses not only metaphor but also framing, metonymy, and prototype-based inferences. Hence it is not “logical” in the technical sense defined by the field of formal logic. It is largely unconscious. It is not transcendent, but fundamentally embodied. Basic inference forms arise partly from the spatial logic characterised by image schemas, which in turn are characterised in terms of the peculiarities of the structures of human brain and bodies. The same is true of aspectual reasoning – reasoning about the way we structure events, which appears to arise out of our systems of motor control. Metaphorical thought, which constitutes an overwhelming proportion of our abstract reasoning, is shaped by our bodily interactions in the world (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999: 514).

The sovereign state is also been conceived of metaphorically in the international relations theory. It is assumed in mainstream ‘statist’ IR thinking that states are sovereign ‘unitary rational actors’ acting in the conditions of anarchy and motivated by the ‘self-interest’ of ‘survival’ (Waltz 1979; Keohane 1986). States are therefore likened to persons and living organisms, whose continued existence (by analogy to mind and body) depends on maintenance of both their personality and physical security. This problem of subjectivity and agency in International Relations has been framed as the



problem of the 'ontological status of the state'. Within the constructivist school several thinkers have grappled with the issue of anthropomorphic state and attempted to resolve it in a number of ways. Heated debates regarding the "ontological status of the state" have taken place in the past decade (Ringmar 1996; Wendt 1999; *Review of International Studies* forum discussion by P.T. Jackson, Iver B. Neumann, Colin Wight and Alexander Wendt 2004, Mitzen 2006, Krolikowski 2008).<sup>8</sup>

States and nations are routinely described as if they were living organisms, which are born, struggle for survival, reach maturity, and even die (Waltz 1979, Wendt 2004, Holsti 2004). States are also attributed emotional responses and states, 'fear' being the central one for the traditionalist approaches to international relations, but also 'hope' and 'humiliation' being attributed not only to individual states, but whole geopolitical regions (Buzan 1991, Moïsi 2009). A metaphor of a state as an organic 'body politic' therefore becomes a common prop when talking about sovereignty and statehood. David Campbell analyses the use of this analogy of his *Writing Security* arguing that the use of the trope of a healthy body -- endangered by all sorts of external influences that can lead to disease, pollution, madness or weakening -- is central to articulation of the discourses of danger delineating the Inside and Outside of a state (Campbell, 1998: 75-78). According to his interpretation, the body trope is a part of discourse of 'man' through the discourse of 'state', as first articulated in Hobbes' *Leviathan* (Campbell, 1998: 56). 'Man' imitates nature in order to construct an artificial likeness of the Self -- the Leviathan, or the sovereign state. These constructions of the state through practices associated with sovereignty and intervention, through body metaphor or otherwise not

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<sup>8</sup> Most realist IR scholars have been simply assuming the agency of the states as persons. Others since have become more self-conscious about anthropomorphising states and have conceded that agency can only be appropriately placed within individuals and that the personhood of states in the international relations is but a metaphor: a shorthand for the complex web of relations and struggles which take place at the domestic level. Alexander Wendt, however, in his *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999) and in the forum discussion in the *Review of International Studies* dedicated to the problem of personhood of states, has taken an unequivocal stance that "states are people too" in a quite literal, and not metaphorical sense. Brent Steele, treats nation-states as actors that seek *ontological security* (Steele 2008: 3). He argues that nation-states attempt to maintain a sense of oneness and sameness over time and space and in order to achieve such a state of coherence, unity and continuity the construct narratives of themselves and engage in practices that solidify their identity and spatial boundaries of the self. Jennifer Mitzen (2006) argues that nation-states act in the interests of their self-identity, sometimes, even at the expense to their physical security.

only delineate the state territorially by separating Inside from Outside, Self from Other, but also creates “moral spaces” of identity (Campbell, 1998: 73).

Individual and collective identities are mutually constitutive and it is hard to disentangle them. Collective identities are called upon in individuals’ constructions of coherent self-identities, as well as institutions like the state whose function is defined as protecting that identity, are anthropomorphised to be seen as acting to protect those identities. Judith Butler (1999) has argued that identity is performative. A successful performance, however, depends on audiences’ reception. The officials’ hegemonic representation of the state as the provider of both physical and ontological security for its citizens is often challenged by subgroup actors and various societal practices. A reified vision whereby state’s ontological security automatically satisfies its individual members’ (citizens’) needs, omits from the description the important process of contestations of identity that take place within a society. This view reflects the logic of representation, where a state as an institution is supposed to represent the “people”, or the “nation” in whom the sovereignty of the state is vested.

Anthony Lang (2002) argues that “the state is embodied and represented in the diplomat/soldier” (Lang, 2002: 18). He writes that “state representatives believe that in their political and ethical actions they are embodying the state agency of the community they represent” (Lang, 2002: 29). It is in those moments of embodiment and representation that the state really comes into existence (17). Regardless of the individuals’ differences in terms of their ontological security, there is a shared commitment within state structure, among the elites and among the population to the preservation of the state’s self-identity.

I do not believe that states can justifiably be analysed as persons writ large. I agree here with Ringmar in that there is no need to discuss the problem of state action in terms of ontological commitments. States exist in so far as they are characters in the stories told about them by the individual actors who claim the authority and the will to speak on behalf of ‘the people’ and thus the state. A state therefore is personified metaphorically by individuals and collectives claiming the right to impersonate and embody ‘the people’. Ringmar in his book *Identity, Interest and Action* (1996) proposes to focus on the contestation of the concept, rather than its essence (45). He, however, takes the

metaphorical (“as if”) approach to state personhood one step further to develop a “narrative theory of action” (1996, Chapter 3). Once one adopts this “narrativistic” perspective the ontological quandary regarding what constitutes an “actor” and what their “existence” ceases to be relevant:

It is simply not possible to say what an actor would be ‘in him-, her-, or itself’, since he, she or it can only come to exist as acting, as preparing to act, or as just having acted. An actor is not what a person or a group ‘really is’ since actors exist only in the narratives they tell about themselves or that are told about them. *Actors exist in stories and nowhere else*, and stories are governed by narratological, not ontological requirements (74-75).

Therefore, while I disagree with anthropomorphisation of states, I believe that they ‘exist’ as persons within the narratives constructed by various actors that claim to speak and act on behalf of ‘the nation’, ‘the people’, or ‘the state’.

### **Metonymy and synecdoche: Impersonating and embodying the sovereign**

Pier Bourdieu pointed out the power of speech acts, such as naming, to bring about the very existence of the groups and entities which are supposed to be described. Arguments about identities, classifications and the boundaries of the groups, according to Bourdieu, are in the fact, “the struggles over the monopoly of the power to make people see and believe, to get them to know and recognise, to impose the legitimate definition of the divisions of the social world and, thereby, to make and unmake groups” (Bourdieu, 1991: 221). Similarly, after the group has been brought into existence by the act of naming it and its recognition by the relevant audiences, it can only continue its existence by delegating its voice to a spokesperson “who will bring it into existence by speaking for it, that is, on its behalf and in its place” (Bourdieu, 1991: 249). The “mystical body” of the people is therefore created out of a collection of individuals through these discursive practices (Bourdieu, 1991: 209).

The ‘people’ therefore is personified through a body metaphor and impersonated by spokespeople designated as the voice of the collective person. Impersonations of the state can take on a form of a demonstration, a theatrical performance of ‘the people’ as a whole. Alternatively, individuals can impersonate the state, the nation or ‘the people’ in their capacity as state officials, army or police servicemen, diplomats, or simply

individuals in interactions with outsiders of the political community. Individuals can impersonate and embody the state in various ways. Alisher Faizullaev argues that while “ontologically states are not persons ... phenomenologically individuals make them such” (Faizullaev, 2007: 538). In his opinion, individuals experience states as persons and those individuals are capable of identifying themselves with states, with this state identity being “different from national, social or political identities” (Faizullaev, 2007: 538).

Sovereignty is *embodied* by many performances within state institutions such as the army. Madeliene Reeves, for example, describes how the state is ‘written’ onto the bodies of soldiers by the abusive practices of *dedovshchina*,<sup>9</sup> experienced by people subjected to body-searches when crossing the border, manifested in posturing of border guards and customs officials on the borders (Reeves 2007). The state leaves its marks on the bodies of people making them into subjects, soldiers or bureaucrats (representatives of the state), while people come to impersonate the state both in the meaning of assuming the personality and authority of the state and imitating, mimicking the appearance and character of that personality.

### **Narrative analysis: telling stories of Self and Other**

This thesis adopts a narrative conception of identity. A narrative identity, according to Ricoeur, is constructed dynamically within a narrative of one’s life (‘a life story’) as “durable properties of a character” (195). According to the narrative theory, developed by Walter Fisher, people are all essentially story-tellers and these story-telling humans are significantly different from the economics’ ‘rational actors’ (Fisher 1987). Narrative conception of rationality is based on coherence and fidelity of the stories told, not on how much is known about the facts of the world and merit of the arguments advanced in defence of a particular course of action. While the rationalist world is that of puzzles waiting to be solved, the narrative world is composed of stories which we can choose to

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<sup>9</sup>*Dedovshchina* is the informal system of subjection and brutalisation of the new conscripts by the senior conscripts about to be demobilised (*dedy*) or by the officers formerly in former Soviet army, and now found in the post-Soviet armed forces. It is equivalent to the English terms ‘hazing’ and ‘bullying’, but in more extreme cases can amount to torture and other degrading and inhumane treatment. There are known cases of fatalities as a result of *dedovshchina*.

create, re-arrange and constantly re-write as we try to make sense of our lives and the world around us (Fisher 1987).

Indeed, it has been argued by a group of scholars working on the intersection of cognitive psychology, linguistics and social sciences that human thinking is fundamentally metaphorical and narrative (for example, Paul Ricour 1977, Soyland 1994, Lakoff and Johnson 2003). Keith Shimko in his essay entitled "Foreign Policy Metaphors: Falling 'Dominoes' and Drug 'Wars'" (1995), examines the role that analogical and metaphorical thinking plays in foreign policy decision making. He applies the use of metaphorical thinking onto the script/schema theory of cognitive psychology. Analogies and metaphors therefore are a means of making sense of the world by tying new information onto the existing network of scripts thus rendering it understandable and manageable. Metaphors are used in the initial stages of decision making ("framing" of the problem), "defining the situation, analysing the issues and stakes involved, and perhaps suggesting a general approach; the actual process of "problem solving" requires the use of historical analogies in order to identify specific courses of action and evaluate their prospects for success or failure. The role of metaphors in decision making is significant if metaphorical thinking is indeed instrumental in framing the problem. Shimko concludes by stating "metaphorical thinking, like analogical thinking, is probably 'inescapable' because people have no choice but to rely on what they already know to understand what they do not know and on past experiences to understand and solve new problems" (Shimko in Neak et al, 1995: 82).

Creation of narrative meaning is a mental process that helps people to combine disparate episodes, events and actions into meaningful and coherent stories, thus making sense of the world around them and helping one understand his or her place in the narrative and, therefore, in the world as well. Not only does narrative construction have this sense-making function but it also serves as the subject-constituting cognitive mechanism (Polkinghorne 1988). In order to be part of a story one has to have a coherent and continuous identity which is more or less constant. Thus 'biographical narratives' on an individual level help construct one's life story as that of a coherent subject; collective narratives (or myths) have a function of sustaining shared beliefs and upholding communal values and thus are important for societal cohesion.

Narratives are held together by metaphorical thinking:

Human experience is not organised according to the same model we have constructed for the material realm. I envision the primary organising principles of human experience is more akin to those that construct poetic meaning than to those that construct the proofs of formal logic. Experience makes connections and enlarges itself through the use of metaphoric processes that link together experiences similar but not exactly the same, and it evaluates items according to the position they hold in relation to larger wholes (Polkinghorne 1988: 16).

All elements in a narrative are evaluated according to their contribution to the final resolution of the story, or its 'point'. Often times narratives can be retrospectively rearranged, their respective elements re-evaluated in the light of the eventual outcome of the story. Once the final outcome is known 'bad' characters and their actions can become 'good' and vice versa depending on what the goal or the desired outcome of the narrative is considered to be. This is very important for our understanding of human sciences, because people and scientists often build their explanations based on some type of narrative in which all elements are connected by a plot highlighting each individual element's contribution to the development and resolution of the story and the achievement of the final outcome of the story. A good example of this is the variety of narrative explanations of the collapse of the Soviet Union. A narrative explanation is by definition retroactive since it clarifies the significance of the events that had occurred based on the outcome that has followed (21).

Identity is normally understood as a perceived continuity, sameness and wholeness of a person's conception of self over time and space. Paul Ricoeur makes a distinction between identity understood as *sameness* and identity as *selfhood*, arguing that they are not the same and only intersect in one sense – both are perceived as having some fundamental permanence in time (Wood, 1991: 189-192). People attempt to achieve a constant and coherent sense of self by 'telling stories' about themselves. For this dissertation's purposes I shall focus on two types of narratives told by people impersonating and embodying the state. The first type of narrative focuses on the past, thus constituting a stable identity which connects the past and present selves, which is especially important in case of such imagined collective 'persons' as 'the people', 'the nation' or 'the state'. The second type of 'story-telling' locates the narrated self in space by tying the collective identity of the sovereign agent to a particular territory.

## Historiography as a 'biographical' narrative of Self and Other

States are constituted in time and space by means of constructing narratives of their origins, pasts and futures ("biographical narratives" of Giddens 1991) as well as creating a presence for themselves in space by constructing "geographies of affection" whereby boundaries between "inside" and "outside", the "us" and "them" are produced (Ringmar, 1999: 77-78). A "biographical narrative", according to Anthony Giddens (1991) is a "narrative of the self, the story or stories by means of which self-identity is reflexively understood, both by the individual concerned and the others" (245).

A person with a reasonably stable sense of self-identity has a feeling of biographical continuity which she is able to grasp reflexively and, to a greater or lesser degree, communicate to other people. ... A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor – important though this is – in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going* (Giddens, 1991: 54, emphasis in the original).

Biographical narratives of the states take the form of historiographies of particular nations, ethnic groups or, in some cases, simply the territories that the current states occupy.

"Geographies of affection" stem from anthropomorphised notions of distance, location and proximity, which are articulated in relation to a human body (back, front, left, right, within sight, within a walking distance, etc). Positions of elevation in relation to one's body as well as the right hand side are associated with light, the sacred and the future and are hierarchically superior to the profane, dark, and the past that are usually linked to the posterior and left-hand side (Tuan, 1977: 35). What is close to us is also considered as safe and superior to what is distant and thus alien (50). An intense attachment to homeland also closely tied to the practice of ancestor worship, whose graves are inevitably fixed within a certain locality. One's human mortality is transcended by the permanence of the land.

Biographical narratives are inseparable from the narratives creating affective geographies in that "abstract space, lacking significance" are turned into "concrete place, filled with meaning" and imbued with time (Tuan, 1977: 199). Whenever an individual feels loss of control over the events unfolding around him, it is natural to evoke an image of an idealised past, which is rescued from the "crumbling landscapes"

with the help of various devices, such as museums, artefacts, memorials and so on (Tuan, 1977: 187-188).

### **Geopolitics as a narrative of belonging**

This dissertation explores the spatial dimension of performance of sovereignty from the critical geopolitics perspective, which looks at geopolitics *as a political and discursive practice* (Aalto, 2003: 20). It is *political* in a Schmittian sense in that it delineates the inside and the outside of the unit of political loyalty, thus creating in-group as opposed to the out-group (Schmitt 2007). This boundary construction is important not only because it actively constructs the link between territoriality of the state to its sovereignty, but also because it creates a 'friend-enemy' distinction, which is central to identity articulation. Geopolitics is also a *discursive* activity by the virtue of framing and justifying policies related to 'other' places and policing of the state boundaries based on geopolitical imaginations that construct places and spaces as either safe or dangerous. Therefore, the policies and actions of states are justified in relation to perceived threats and national interests. Moreover, geopolitical discourses are instrumental for ontological assertions of existence of certain places – before any framing of places as dangerous can take place the existence of such a place has to be assumed. With these assertions also come assumptions of the natural relations between these entities as well as accounts of their agency and motivations. These are usually achieved through the rhetorical device of ontological metaphor that identifies abstract concepts and entities as persons (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003: 33). States thus are almost invariably referred to and treated as persons in IR theorising as well as our everyday speech. All these elements of discourse – entities with their assumed nature and motivations, assumptions of relations existing between various entities, and metaphors used to map new concepts onto the familiar ones – are tied together through the construction of narratives.

The wholeness and unity of the state and society has been traditionally represented from the organismic metaphor in geopolitical thought. The founders of geopolitics Ratzel and Kjellen, conceived of states as 'living organisms, which are born, grow and



die' (Faizullaev, 2007: 537). A similar organismic metaphor of sovereign nation-state as the most competitive life form in the process of natural selection is described by Spryut (1994). States were also considered as a 'natural habitat' for ethnic groups and nations as biological species fighting for the 'living space'. Sovereignty is therefore articulated in a set of practices and speech acts whereby states are personated, impersonated and embodied in particular historical and geographical circumstances.

#### ***4. Research design: Sovereignty as a dialogue***

Discourse analytic research design in this study has been constructed according to the third of Lene Hansen's 'ideal types' (2006: 75-82); based on the number of selves involved, the number of events analysed, 'intertextual models' utilised and the temporal perspective adopted. The overall research design incorporated four key elements and can be summarised as follows:

- *Number of selves*: the discursive encounter seeks to establish two identities or state-persons. In other words, the analysis does not assume that there are actually two persons communicating within the discursive encounter, merely that multiple actors seek to speak on behalf of and represent idealised 'Tajik' and 'Uzbek' identities, which are simulated, dissimulated and contested in the process;
- *Number of events*: three key events are analysed within this research design: first one is the delimitation of the borders in 1920s; second is the independence from the Soviet Union in 1991; finally, the ongoing 'event' of the controversy and policies surrounding the construction of the Roghun hydropower station. These 'events' are related due to their significance to the process of state-making and sovereignty-assertion through Tajik-Uzbek relations.
- *Intertextual model*: The research design uses a mixed intertextual model by analysing a wide range of sources and discourses. While most of the discussion is focused on the official discourse, wider political debate and cultural representations are also included.

- *Temporal perspective*: The study focuses mainly on two moments in central Asian history that are crucial for understanding of the nature of statehood and sovereignty. These are the two periods of state-creation: the first being the period of delimitation and nation-building in the 1920-30s, and the second starting with independence and state-building in the 1990-2000s.

### **Dialogic analysis: discursive encounters**

An important aspect of narrative practices of self-construction examined in this dissertation is its interactional component. Stories told on behalf of sovereign agents perform social actions through direct and indirect involvement of audiences. The process of interactive constitution of identity is dynamic. Some research, for example, has demonstrated how the response of the audience made the story-teller change the entire point of the story (Polanyi, 1985: 63-74). Narratives, being in essence *stories* that we tell about ourselves and the world around us, are embedded in a social process of interaction with significant others. Stories are told to audiences and gain or lose their credibility from reactions of the listeners. Audiences are involved in the construction and reconstruction of stories, either directly, through engaging in a dialogue, or indirectly, through the process of what Bakhtin referred to as “hidden dialogicality”:

Imagine a dialogue of two persons in which the statements of the second speaker are omitted, but in such a way that the general sense is not at all violated. The second speaker is present invisibly, his words are not there, but deep traces left by these words have a determining influence on all the present and visible words of the first speaker. We sense that this is a conversation of the most intense kind, for each present, uttered word responds and reacts with its every fiber to the invisible speaker, points to something outside itself, beyond its own limits, to the unspoken words of another person. (Bakhtin, 1984: 197).

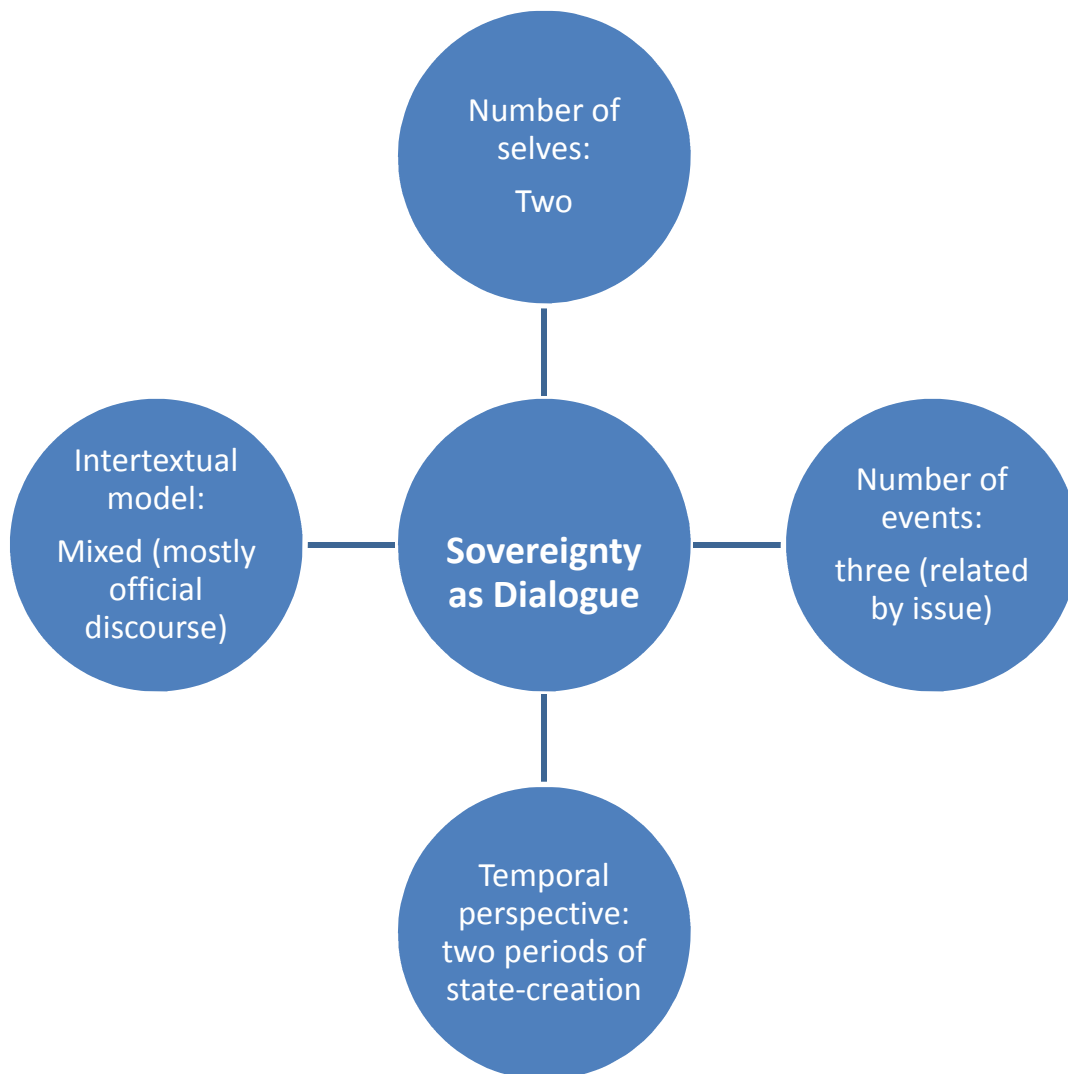
According to Bakhtin, in the drama that is every utterance there are three ‘characters’ involved, three ‘voices’: the personal voice of an intentional speaker (intentionality), the voice of the audience it is addressed to (addressivity), and the voices of the storytellers who came before you (intertextuality) (Bakhtin, 1986b: 121-122, quoted in Wertsch 2002: 16). Discourse analysts have classified narratives’ functions as *referential* and *dialogic* (Ricoeur 1981, Wertsch 2002: 57-60). The former “concerns the relation between narratives and the settings, actors, and events they depict”, while the latter are about “the relations between one narrative and another” (Wertsch, 2002: 62).

The methodological choice of analysis of so-called “discursive encounters” in this thesis allows “to contrast the discourse of the Self with the Other’s ‘counter-construction’ of Self and Other” (Hansen, 2006: 76). Most of the studies utilising the method of discourse analysis across different disciplines looked at the constructions of the Self (usually a European or ‘Western’) in relation to or in opposition to an exotic Orientalised Other (Said 1978, Campbell 1992, Doty 1996, Neumann 1999).

Those studies, however, do not examine the other’s discourse of that self (the relationship here is reversed, of course, and the other becomes the self and vice versa). Such ostensible absence of the discourse analytical studies of discursive encounters is easily explained by practical difficulties of gaining access to texts produced by the non-European other, both in physical and linguistic sense. Unlike other studies of identity in international relations that applied discourse analytical strategy to the unequal discursive and political power relations between a former colonial power and a post-colonial subject, this study focuses on two post-Soviet states’ formulations of identity in relation and in opposition to one another.

This is an interesting project for two main reasons. First, we can see that constructions of identity in international relations are not necessarily formed around superiority/inferiority. Discursive encounters inevitably take place within the context of unequal power relations, whereby the terms and boundaries, within which possible discourse can take place are usually delineated by the more powerful of the interlocutors. The other, however, can be represented not only as inferior, but also threatening or simply foreign to the point of indifference. Second, in case of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, where identity boundaries are often indeterminate and ambiguous, it is of interest to see how identity and territorial boundaries are constituted through discourse and practice of foreign policy, historiography and geopolitics.

## Research design: Sovereignty as Dialogue



Above is the figure based on the research design model as proposed by Lena Hansen (2006: 75), modified by taking into account the spatial dimension of this research project. The figure summarises all the relevant components of the research design. There are two main components that set this research apart from other similar discourse analytic accounts in the study of IR. First, this is one of the first studies which systematically undertakes a dialogic study of identity construction in Central Asia (the only other I am aware of is Megoran 2004). Second, the study incorporates both the study of articulation of sovereign identity of the state through time (historiographic narratives) and space (geopolitics of water use).

## Conclusion

Two tendencies have been the source of ambiguity in the various conceptualisations of sovereignty. First, there is the fact that the referent object of sovereignty has shifted over time with new signs standing for the transcendental entity of God as the ultimate master-signifier. Second, there is consistent recourse to the anthropomorphic conceptualisations of the varying referent objects of sovereignty. The evolution of the concept is the story of 'quilting' of various signifiers to the empty master-signifier of sovereignty following the logic of representation, whereby metaphor of a sovereign as a person (with a body, consciousness, morality and emotional states, and life cycles comparable to that of a human being) emerged as the basis of the main narratives.

The following chapter examines the evolution of the concept of statehood and sovereignty in Central Asia and traces the path of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to independence. We are going to see how the 'people' were redefined by the Soviet state as both 'national/ethnic' and 'proletarian' people and how the Sovietisation of Central Asia changed the basis for sovereign statehood from dynastic into national determination. A brief history of the delimitation of Central Asia will demonstrate the roots of the Tajik-Uzbek antagonism, which is still relevant today both within academic circles discussing 'ethnogenesis' and 'history of statehood', and in policy circles debating the proper use of region's water resources.

## Chapter Three

# Two Periods of State-Creation

*We have Italy; now, let's have Italians*  
(Massimo D'Azeglio on Italian unification)

This chapter investigates two periods of state-creation in Central Asia: the emergence of the Tajik and the Uzbek Soviet Socialist republics in 1920s and the period of sovereignisation and independent statehood since 1991. These two periods are presented in chronological order but each thematic section incorporates both. First, the chapter turns to the events preceding the demarcation of the current borders of the Tajik and the Uzbek state in 1920s. An account of the post-independence debates regarding the history of delimitation is outlined in that section. Second, the case of Sarts - the group that went from being the main category used to describe the population of Central Asia to complete disappearance from political discourse in 1920s - is discussed. The Sarts reappear in the post-independence period within the academic disputes between Tajik and Uzbek historians and ethnographers. Finally, the chapter is concluded by a discussion of how in the post-Soviet period sovereign statehood itself becomes elevated into the status of ideology and a normative requirement. This chapter, therefore, engages with two formative periods for Central Asian states, linking them across time and space.

### ***1. The delimitation of national republics: the process, the rationale and the post-Soviet interpretations***

Prior to the military expansion of the Russian Empire into Central Asia, there were three major dynastic state formations in the region – the Khanates of Qoqand and Khiva and the Bukhara Emirate (Iskhakov, 1997: 17). All three of these state formations were

ruled by Uzbek<sup>1</sup> dynasties and the boundaries among them were under constant contestation (Bregel, 2003: 62; Akhmedzhanov, 1995, 4; Iskhakov, 1997: 16). Boundaries and identities in Central Asia during that period were characterized by high fluidity and areas of shifting overlap (Brower 1997, Slezkine 1997).

**Figure 1. The end of the 19th century and the early 20th century: Western Turkestan under Russian rule (Bregel 2003: 93)**



<sup>1</sup> In the 18th century the basins of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya passed under the control of three Uzbek khanates. These were, from west to east, the Qunggirats based in Khiva in Khorezm (1717–1920), the Mangits in Bukhara (1753–1920), and the Mings in Kokand (c. 1710–1876). Source: .Soucek 2000: 177-180.

Russian imperial conquest in late 19<sup>th</sup> century resulted in establishing of the Governorate-General of Turkestan, which incorporated the former Khanate of Qoqand, with an administrative center in Tashkent (Alimova & Rtveladze, 2001: 122). Unlike the territories to the north that were fully incorporated into the empire, the Khanate of Khiva and Emirate of Bukhara received a special status of nominal independence (Iskhakov, 1997: 28). While Bukhara nominally remained independent, Khiva became a protectorate directly administered from Petroaleksandrovsk (Amu-daryinskiy otdel of the Sir-daryinskaya oblast within Turkestan General-Governorship) thus being subordinate to Tashkent. Both Bukhara and Khiva retained full control over their internal affairs however, only having to abolish slavery and reduce their armies in accordance with their agreement with Russia (Bregel, 2003: 90). The Russian authorities refrained from interfering into the internal affairs of Khiva and Bukhara. The Turkestan administration, governed by General Von Kaufman, deemed the achievement of a “stable peace with Bukhara” and widening of trade relations with it as its main policy success, claiming that for the Russian empire there is no need to annex the emirate. It was considered much more beneficial to rule with the help of an obedient emir, rather than keep a standing army and the administrative apparatus necessary for maintaining control over colonial territories (Alimova & Rtveladze, 2001: 124). Although initially Russian forces were reluctant to establish formal rule over the region, the conquest crept on. Between 1868 and 1876, substantial parts were annexed from Bukhara (including Samarkand) and Khiva, while the remaining parts were left as protectorates; the Qoqand khanate was abolished altogether with all its territories annexed (Soucek, 2000: 198-199).

The momentous changes that took place at the heart of the Russian empire in the first two decades of the twentieth century did not affect its southern protectorates in any significant measure initially. The Bolshevik revolution was reenacted in Tashkent shortly after the fateful events in Russia and was wholly an undertaking of the ethnic Russian and other ‘European’ workers and exile revolutionaries. The Provisional Government in Petrograd was initially represented by the Turkestan Committee in Tashkent, and, after October 1917, the Tashkent Soviet. The ‘Europeans’ continued to exclude the local population from power structures, and rejected the calls for a coalition government from the indigenous ‘Muslim’ councils, justifying their refusal by portrayal



of the Muslim leaders as 'backward', non-proletarian and incapable of self-administration. The alienated local elites reacted by establishing parallel "Muslim" soviets (Soucek, 2000: 211).

In December 1917 a Congress of the Muslims and Ulama in Kokand declared a territorial autonomy "in union with the Federal Democratic Republic of Russia" (Soucek, 2000: 213). The Kokand Provisional Government (*Quqond/Turkiston muhdoriyati*), which existed till February 1918, turned out to be a "head without a body", lacking an army, wide support of the population and financial means, it was crushed by the Russian troops sent by the Tashkent Soviet (Rakowska-Harmstone, 1970: 19). The period between December 1917 and 1918 in Turkestan was therefore marked by a confrontation between two conceptions of the legitimate basis for sovereignty. The Tashkent Soviet was guided by revolutionary ideas and saw the government in Kokand as bourgeois and therefore illegitimate. The indigenous leaders in Kokand, however, were struggling for self-determination and saw the Tashkent government as a continuation of colonial rule. Another layer of confrontation was added by a contestation of authority and power between the central government in Russia and the local communists in Tashkent (Soucek, 2000: 217). The Governorate-General of Turkestan, therefore, was transformed into the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TASSR) in April 1918. Territorially it remained unaltered until national delimitation in 1924.

At the same time as the 'Muslim' autonomy was struggling for recognition in Kokand, the Jadids of Bukhara and Khiva (the so-called 'Young Khivans' and 'Young Bukharans') saw the revolution as an opportunity to shake off the double-burden of monarchical despotism and tsarist colonialism (Khalid 1999; Soucek, 2000: 221). They appealed to the Soviet in Tashkent to intervene. Khiva fell in February 1920 and in April that year the khanate was declared Khorezmian People's Soviet Republic (PSR). Bukhara followed the suit in September when the Young Bukharans started an uprising in Chardjou and backed up by Frunze's Red Army division succeeded in taking over the power in the emirate. Emir said Alim Khan fled to Eastern Bukhara (the part of the emirate that was to become Tajikistan). In October that year Bukhara Emirate was transformed into Bukharan PSR (Soucek, 2000: 222). Jadids Fayzulla Khojaev and

Abdulrauf Fitrat became the first prime minister and the foreign minister of the new republic, respectively (Soucek, 2000: 223).

Both of the Peoples' republics of Khiva and Bukhara were still considered independent and their relations with Russian were determined by the treaty of alliance signed in March 1921. Up until the national delimitation the boundaries of these territorial formations remained unchanged. It was only in 1924 that the plans started to be made for Bukhara, Khiva and Turkestan to be put "into a big cauldron" and divided "according to the nationalities principle thus creating new republics" (Karasar, 2002: 204).

### **A crude division?**

The process of transformation of the former Governorates-General and Russian protectorates into the Soviet Union republics has been labelled as the 'national territorial delimitation' [*Natsional'no-territorial'noe razmezhevanie*] in Soviet historiography and adopted by scholars of the Soviet Union (Soucek, 2000: 223). The National territorial delimitation of 1924-29 reorganized the political boundaries and introduced a radically new principle of social and political identity in the region. Hirsch identified three main principles that guided the delimitation process: the ethnographic ('national') that ensured that compactly habituating ethnic groups are given autonomy or in case of larger groups, a territorial unit; the economic viability principle maintained that economically interdependent regions should not be separated; and finally, the principle of administrative and political rationality, which often took precedence over the other two (Hirsch, 2000: 211).

Although both the Khorezm and Bukhara *People's* Socialist republics were initially transformed into the *Soviet* Socialist Republics in order to qualify to join the USSR (in October 1923 and September 1924 respectively), a decision was then made to remold them together with Turkestan into completely new federal units (Soucek, 2000: 224). In late October of 1924 the Central Executive Committee of the USSR confirmed the decisions by all relevant regional bodies regarding the national territorial delimitation in Central Asia. As a result, national territorial units belonging to three tiers of Soviet statehood were formed. The highest within this hierarchy of statehood was the status

of a Socialist Soviet Republic (SSR), which was a union member and had (declaratively at least) full sovereignty and the right to secession. Second in the degree of autonomy were the autonomous republics (ASSR), which were included within a socialist republic. Finally, there were autonomous oblasts and regions, national districts and village soviets and even collective farms providing cultural autonomy to ethnic groups contained within an SSR or an ASSR (Martin in Suny and Martin, 2001: 73). This has been called “*matrioshka*” system after the famous Russian nesting dolls (Slezkine, 1994: 430).

In the summer of 1920, Vladimir Lenin famously wrote a resolution ordering “to 1) draw up a map (ethnographic, etc) of Turkestan with subdivisions into Uzbekia, Kirgizia and Turkmenia; 2) To find out the conditions of merger or division of these three parts in detail” (Gordienko, 1959: 150). This order started the process of negotiation of the future boundaries of Central Asia. Despite the fact that it was not put into action until 1924 this document points to several important facts regarding the Soviet conceptions of nationalities in the region. First, we find out that there existed a general understanding of there being three main identity groups in the area with languages, lifestyles, appearances and cultures distinct enough to be identified for future territorial formations fit for nation-statehood. The finer differences between the Kirgiz and the Kazakh (or Kara-Kirgiz and Kirgiz at the time) and between the Uzbeks and the Tajiks were articulated later, in the course of the process of delimitation. Moreover, there was a certain measure of foreign policy consideration in the implementation of nationalities policies in Central Asia, which was seen by the Bolsheviks as a “bridge to the East”, a means to propel the global revolution (Karasar 2002).

Figure 2.1. Central Asia before delimitation (1920-1924). Source: Carlisle 1994, p. 112.



As a result three major national units emerged initially: (1) the Kirgiz [=Kazakh] Autonomous Socialist Republic within the Russian Federation comprised of the former Turgayskaya, Semipalatinskaya, Akmolinskaya and Ural'skaya oblasts of Turkestan SSR as well as a part of Astrakhan and the Mangishlak area of the Zakaspiyskaya oblast; (2) the Turkmen SSR made of the territories of the Zakaspiyskaya oblast (except Mangishlak, which was given to Kirgiz [=Kazakh ASSR in 1920]); and (3) the Uzbek SSR, which initially included the territory of Bukhara SSR, western parts of Khorazm SSR (Khiva) and Sirdaryinskaya, Samarkandskaya and Ferganskaya oblasts of the Turkestan ASSR (Bregel 2003: 94).

Figure 3.2.. Central Asia during delimitation (1924-1929). Source: Carlisle 1994, p. 113.



National delimitation in the region was officially put on the agenda with the report by Faizulla Hodjaev “On delimitation of Soviet Central Asia into a set of republics according to national identity (*O razmezhevanii Sovetskoi Srednei Azii na riad respublik po natsional’nomu priznaku*)” at the Central Committee of Bukhara Communist Party’s session in February 1924 (Masov, 2004: 357). A committee was created to deliberate on the most sensible way to conduct the delimitation to meet both the requirement of national self-determination and economic viability. Haugen argues that ‘Uzbek-Tajik’ emerged as a joint identity counterpoised to the largely nomadic and rural ‘Turkmen’ and ‘Kazakh’ (2003: 156-7). The separation of ‘Tajik’ from ‘Uzbek’ only occurred as a reaction to rapid ‘nationalisation’ of the new Uzbek SSR within the short period between 1924 and 1926. Distinct ‘Tajik voices’, thus, emerged only as a result of ‘nationalisation of political discourse’ within the ‘Uzbek-Tajik’ republic, whereby Tajik nationalism developed as a “kind of minority nationalism that defined itself in opposition to ‘Uzbek’” (160).

The Uzbek sub-committee was adamant in its rejection of merger into a “Central Asian Federation” and emphasized that “it is an unconditional necessity for an independent Uzbek Republic to enter the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the same basis as the

Ukraine Republic and other Soviet Republics” (Carlisle, 1994: 118). The committee drew up theses that envisaged creation of “special Soviet republics” of Uzbeks and Turkmens, reunification of the Kyrgyz (Kazakh) population with the already existing Kazakh ASSR (within Russian Federation); the document also stated that “Tajik people (*narodnost’ tadzhikov*) will create an autonomous oblast with Uzbekistan – Bukhara composed of Match, Karategin and Garm” (Masov, 2004: 357).

This statement then was replicated in other official documents on the issue and is of interest for our analysis for two reasons. First, the hyphenation of Uzbekistan and Bukhara demonstrates that the project of Uzbekistan was understood by the local elites as synonymous with Bukhara. Second, it shows the narrow understanding of Tajiks as the mountain people, whereas the urbanite Farsi-speakers were neither considered Tajik by others nor self-identified as such. The project of Tajik autonomous oblast’ was to include only the high mountainous regions, populated by peoples speaking a distinct dialect of Farsi language, having a distinct appearance and life style, whose main occupation (according to urbanites, who perhaps only had limited contact with mountain dwellers) was “collection and sale in the towns of the valleys of firewood and snow” (Masov, 1991: 44).

The period between 1924 and 1926 is marked by conspicuous absence of ‘Tajik voices’ within the debate on delimitation. The initial low level of interest in self-determination among those called ‘Tajiks’ is demonstrated by the quote of Faizulla Hodjaev: “As for the Tajiks, in relation to them we have two options: either they can be included in our republic as an autonomous part (*kak samostoiatel’aia chast’*) or, to receive complete independence as well; on this issue we do not have the opinion of Tajiks themselves” (Masov, 2004: 360). To some scholars it indicates the lack of distinct national consciousness of those who could potentially identify themselves as Tajiks at that point in time (Haugen 2003, Schoeberlein 1994). To other observers, most notably Tajik nationalists like Rahim Masov, this is a sign of pan-Turkic ambition to silence and marginalize Tajik voices and the false-consciousness of ‘Tajiks’ themselves, who ‘poisoned’ by the venom of pan-Turkism betrayed their ‘true’ national interests (Masov, 2008: 53).

During the initial stages of the process of deliberations on the national territorial delimitation of Central Asia in 1924, Tajiks were not represented as a subcommittee comprised of the Party members self-identifying as Tajiks. According to Masov, that was all part of the Pan-Turkist/great Uzbek chauvinist conspiracy against Tajik statehood. It seems to me, however, that among the elites from among urban intelligentsia of Samarkand, Khudjand and Bukhara, whose primary identities were local and political, there were simply no sympathizers with the cause of Tajik independence. There was nobody to represent Tajiks and therefore the subcommittee was created for pure pro forma three days prior to the session of Central Committee that adopted the plan of delimitation (*Soviet Encyclopedia* 1974: 107). The subcommittee was comprised of ‘Uzbek’ communists Ch. Imamov, A. Hodjibaev and M. Saidjanov, who, according to Masov were ill-placed to defend the interests of the Tajiks. The ambivalence regarding whose interests are reflected by the delimitation can be observed in the minutes of the meeting that discussed the project of Tajik AO (autonomous oblast’). Upon hearing the details of project one of the participants of the session, Hodjanov, made the following remarks, addressing the ‘representative’ of Tajiks:

We have included forty percent of Tajiks into the autonomous oblast’, while the rest are left with nothing [*ostaʼutsʼa ni pri chem*]. Furthermore, the cultural centers of Tajiks remain within Uzbek republic, whereas the mountainous, unreachable places we are giving to the oblast’. Perhaps, it is not your fault. You were not given much more (laughter in the audience), but nonetheless this hardly resembles ‘self-determination’. If there is such little need in this oblast’, then the Executive Bureau is not forcing anyone into self-determination... I find this issue insufficiently developed, and although comrades Tajiks, it seems, are satisfied with its resolution, I am not (laughter). What kind of autonomy is that, if out of one million and two hundred thousand Tajiks eight hundred thousand are left outside? I think that based on the decree of Politburo we can include 3 people in the bureau of the committee, but not to declare the tops of the mountains as a republic, this is quite insufficient and if you were to include me among Tajiks, then I, doubtlessly, would not say much more (Masov, 1991: 45-6).

Further in the minutes comrade Imamov asked Hodjanov to refrain from giving opinions “in the role of Tajiks”, saying that “one cannot be more Tajik than Tajiks themselves (laughter), and if he [Hodjanov] is not satisfied with the existing state of affairs, that is due to the fact that there is no difference between us [Uzbeks] and Tajiks” (Masov, 1991: 47). Finally, when the session proceeded to voting on the issue, the chair, I.A. Zelenskiy asked “Who’s in favour of the project proposed by the Tajiks?” Hodjanov corrected “By the Uzbeks” (Masov, 1991: 50).

Being the head of the Institute of History of the Tajik Academy of Sciences Rahim Masov (1991) has been promoting the view that existence of Tajiks as an ethnic group of their own was systematically silenced and denied by the pan-Turkist forces that were predominant in Central Asia in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Pan-Turkism and “Great Uzbek chauvinism” are equated in Tajik history writing, and the terminology used to make the link quotes directly from the Soviet discourse on nationalities (Masov, 2004: 356). While the Soviets promoted national self-determination of the peoples that were oppressed during the Tsarist colonization, they distinguished between “good” self-determination and “bad” great power chauvinism, “the nationalism of oppressor nations and the nationalism of oppressed nations, the nationalism of large nations and the nationalism of small nations” (Martin, 2001: 71). Thus the more numerous peoples of a particular region were accused of chauvinistic policies and attitudes towards lesser ethnicities within those territories. For instance, there were accusations of great Georgian chauvinism towards Ossetians and Abkhazians; Great Russian chauvinism towards Belorussians; and, similarly, great Uzbek chauvinism towards Tajiks (Martin, 2001: 71-2).

While almost all of the major ethnic groups claimed some sort of autonomy and created institutions for advancement of their educational and cultural needs, Tajiks had none. In fact, an argument was advanced (as was the case with the Sart population) that there was no real difference between the Tajiks and the Uzbeks (Masov, 1991: 47). Assimilation of Tajiks was seen as an inevitable and desirable outcome of state-building and modernization of the region. Tajik language was viewed by many (as well as the Arabic script that was used to write it) as the language of the Amir (the dethroned monarch) and therefore a symbol of feudalism and backwardness (Masov, 1991: 73). Thus, for instance, *Turkestan* newspaper published an article entitled “In the country of Tajiks” in January 1924 that stated:

The desire to use this language [Tajik – R. M.] means, first of all, a striving to stand on the sidewalk of life [*otdelit'sia ot zhizni*], because life within the stream of history is against it [Tajik language], secondly, the fact of its acceptance means to accept not a useful, but a useless and a redundant language, and therefore the Tajiks need to simply [*prosto naprosto*] immediately switch to Uzbek and not to hold on to a ‘special Tajik language’, since ‘the path of social progress has already determined their fate’ (quoted in Masov 1991: 17).

It has been argued that possibility of statehood in parts of East Bukhara was contingent upon the success of the Red Army in fighting the local insurgency of the *basmachi*



movement (Bergne, 2007: 31-8). One of the arguments against giving Tajikistan the status of a union republic was the lack of dominance of the Soviets on the ground in many regions populated predominantly by Tajiks. The same applied to the possibility of unification of the so called “mountain” and “valley” Tajiks into a single administrative-territorial unit, thus creating a ‘Greater Tajikistan’. Representatives of Tajiks from among the Uzbek Communists kept saying that ‘at the moment’ the inclusion of all Tajiks into a single republic was impossible “neither geographically nor economically” (Masov, 2004: 368). We can see from the statements of various representatives that they envisaged possibility and even necessity of multiple revisions of the national territorial delimitation based on the will of people populating certain regions (which partially did take place in 1920s-30s). As the chair of the *Sredazburo* Zelenskiy said in his official statement regarding the outcomes of the delimitation: “This work [creation of the national republics] we have undertaken in a rough draft version [*v cherne*], there is still a lot that has remained unspoken [*nedoskazannogo*] here; this work has been done with an axe [*prodelana toporom*]” (Masov, 1991: 66).

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of September of 1924 the borders of the Tajik autonomous *oblast* (AO) were finalized. The issue was reopened shortly after by the chair of the Central Executive Committee of East Bukhara Nusratullo Makhsum (Lutfullaev), who upon familiarizing himself with the minutes of the commission of national territorial delimitation wrote a letter to the Communist Party’s Central Committee addressed to Stalin. In that letter he expressed an opinion that “the issue concerning the interests of the Tajik people was resolved unjustly” (Masov, 2004: 369). In Makhsum’s opinion, the borders of the *oblast* were drawn incorrectly with a large proportion of territories populated by Tajiks adjacent to the Tajik AO included in Uzbek SSR, while the decision to create the Tajik AO as a subordinate part of Uzbekistan violated the rights of Tajiks to self-determination on the par with Uzbeks and Turkmen. The cultural centers with predominant Tajik population were also separated from Tajik AO. Bukhara, Samarkand and Khujand that could potentially serve as capital cities for Tajikistan remained within Uzbekistan because Tajiks and Uzbeks were said to cohabitate peacefully within those regions while the economic interests of both groups were considered to be one and the same. Therefore, the Tajik population of the valleys was said to “economically gravitate towards Uzbek territories” (Masov, 2004: 368). Besides, Samarkand was the capital of

the Uzbek SSR and therefore all the Tajik population living in and around Samarkand could not be included in Tajikistan. Some (including first of all Masov) interpret the decision to have Samarkand as the first Uzbek capital as part of the greater Uzbek conspiracy against Tajik statehood. The main 'proof' of their point is that shortly after the delimitation the capital was moved from Samarkand to Tashkent (in 1930) thus demonstrating that the initial choice of capital was instrumental in order to keep the city and the oblast within Uzbekistan. It is not clear why exactly the change of the capital happened, but one can suggest that once Samarkand was secured, Tashkent, which was also disputed between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan became the first choice for the national capital as the biggest and the most industrialized city in the region (Bergne, 2007: 49).

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of October of 1924 the Politburo of the Central Committee of Bolshevik Party ruled to create an autonomous republic of Tajiks (instead of *oblast*) within Uzbek SSR (Masov 2004: 372). The Committee also made a decision to consider inclusion of Pamir as an autonomous *oblast* within the Tajik ASSR, which eventually, among other factors allowed the promotion of Tajikistan to a union republic status (*Encyclopedia* 1974: 108). The territory of the Tajik ASSR was initially comprised of five regions (*viloyats*) of Bukhara People's Soviet Republic that were included in it in 1924. They were Garm, Dushanbe, Kulyab, Kurgan-Tube regions and Karatag *tuman* of Sary-Assiyo *viloyat*. In the end of November that year additional territories were added to Tajik ASSR, namely, the parts of former Turkestan Republic – Ura-Yube and Pendjikent regions. Pamir *oblast* renamed as the Gorno-Badakhshan AO was added to the republic's territory in January 1925. Finally, the territory of Khujand *okrug* of Uzbek SSR entered territory of Tajikistan in September of 1929 as a concession to territorial claims of Tajiks when the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic was created (Bergne, 2007: 105). Thus the territory of Tajik oblast was considerably increased as it grew to first an ASSR and then to an SSR between 1924 and 1929. However, it fell short of the grand project of Greater Tajikistan that the Tajik elite aspired to (Abashin 2003).

Tajik historiography describes the five years when Tajikistan existed as an autonomous republic within Uzbekistan as the period of extreme hardship and injustice towards Tajik people from Uzbek authorities (Masov 1991, Bergne 2007: 55-85). The Uzbek SSR was charged with economic wellbeing and development of its subordinate republic.

The common budget allocated from the Center was to be benevolently redistributed towards the needs of Tajik ASSR by the Uzbek administrators in Tashkent. In reality, however, Uzbekistan preferred to use the resources allocated for the needs of both republics solely for the development of its own regions (Bergne 2007).

Being a minority within Uzbekistan, Tajiks also relied on Uzbek authorities in provision of their educational, language and cultural rights. However, the cadres' practices in Uzbek SSR discriminated against other ethnicities, especially Tajiks. Therefore, people were unwilling to openly record their identity as Tajiks or send their children to Tajik schools as that was seen as not conducive to success in one's career (Bergne 2007). An appointment to work in Tajikistan was seen as an exile for those, who fell out of favour in Tashkent (Masov 2004: 466). In Samarkand as well as other regions of Uzbekistan populated by Tajiks, as documental evidence suggests, teaching in Tajik was prohibited under various excuses.

During the census conducted in 1926 Tajiks living in Uzbekistan reportedly were intimidated into recording themselves as Uzbeks under the threats of being exiled into former Eastern Bukhara, the unfriendly and poor mountainous regions that made up Tajik ASSR; some of those, who declared their Tajik identity were rumored to had been removed from their high posts as a result. One's social mobility was seen as very much depending on the declared nationality, which is why many people found it natural to follow the path of least resistance in those turbulent times (Schoeberlein 1994).

According to the official Tajik history narrative, the Tajiks as a people were facing the threat of eventual complete assimilation and disappearance under the willful rule of the Uzbek big brother. Therefore, the creation of Tajik SSR was an event of grandiose significance, since it "gave a final blow to the assertions of Pan-Turkists to the extent that Tajiks are not a separate people, but are 'an Iranised Turkic tribe'. Tajik people were rescued from the danger of dissolution in the environment of Turkic peoples, gained an opportunity to form a nation" (Masov, 2004: 378).

It is still debated whether or not Uzbekistan emerged as the 'winner' from the delimitation process. Roy (2000) and Carlisle (1994) seem to think that Uzbekistan was accorded preferential treatment, while Allworth (1990) thought that Soviet border-

making was anti-Uzbek ('divide and rule' theory). Donald Carlisle argues that Uzbekistan was in fact "Bukhara writ large" (1994: 105), while Sergei Abashin writes that "the Uzbek project was realized in 1920s as a truncated version of the "Turkestan project", as a result of which contemporary Uzbek nationalism still bears an imprint of the idea of pan-Turkism" (Abashin, 2007: 196). Since there was no possibility for the Jadids, who sympathized with and then joined Bolsheviks, to fulfill their Pan-Turkist agenda in the region, Uzbekistan became its Soviet incarnation, Abashin argues. According to this interpretation, the construct of "great Uzbekistan", which initially included Tajikistan as an autonomous republic with Uzbek SSR, was reduced to present borders to counter what was seen as "great nation chauvinism" of Uzbeks towards Tajiks.

The project of "great Tajikistan", which its founding fathers envisaged and that would include the lion's share of present-day Uzbekistan's most culturally developed urban centers and fertile lands, failed to materialize as well, due to a host of factors. Arguably the Tajik demands could not be satisfied, because, according to state-building principles of the USSR, in order to get a status of the Union republic a republic had to have an international border (Hirsch, 2000: 219-224). If Tajik demands for Termez, Surkhandarya and Bukhara oblast' were met, Uzbekistan would have lost its union republic status and would have to enter "great Tajikistan" project on the rights of an autonomous republic. In other words, there would be a total reversal of roles between the two. In the end, Tajikistan only got Khujand to make it economically viable, while all the other territories that were claimed remained with Uzbekistan, as the results of 1926 census were used, not the 1920 census as Tajiks demanded (Hirsch, 2000: 222).

The local actors and elites were not entirely devoid of agency in the process of delimitation. Obiya Chika in an essay entitled *When Faizulla Khojaev Decided to Be an Uzbek* explores this politician's ostensibly radical transition from local/regional identity (Bukharan) to that based on an ethnic designation (Uzbek) in 1924-5 (2001: 99-118). Chika argues that this was a political survival strategy of choice not only on a personal level. In Chika's interpretation, Khojaev acted in the interest of preserving Bukhara's statehood and sovereignty to the best of his ability given the circumstances. Donald Carlisle (1994) has convincingly argued that Uzbekistan emerged a clear winner from the process of *razmezhevanie*, which for Uzbeks amounted to reorganization of the

lands of the former Bukhara emirate to include all of the fertile and industrialized territories from the neighboring Khiva and Turkestan. In other words, the new Uzbek SSR “was in fact a Greater Bukhara”; and the main beneficiaries of the process of delimitation were the Bukhara Jadids, including Failzulla Khojaev, the founding father of Uzbekistan, himself (104-5). Chika writes that Khojaev was insisting that Bukhara should enter the USSR on the par with other union republics as an SSR. Once it became clear that the doors to the Union were shut for Bukhara as a self-standing political entity due to the negative reputation it had acquired among the Bolsheviks, Khojaev accepted the option of national delimitation as a lesser evil in preserving Bukhara even if in a diluted form and rebranded as ‘Uzbekistan’.

Delimitation according to the national principle was by no means the only option on the table at that point: the alternatives to the national principle of division included: (1) conducting national delimitation only within Turkestan ASSR, i.e. allowing Bukhara and Khiva preserve their independence; (2) creation of a Central Asian Federation by analogy with the Transcaucasian Federation; and (3) transforming the Turkmen oblast into a Turkmen Autonomous Republic (Carlisle 1994: 116). Neither of the options satisfied the political needs of the day and it was decided to proceed with the national delimitation, thus creating a Turkmen SSR out of the Transcaspian part of Turkestan and an Uzbek SSR composed of Uzbek parts of Bukhara, Khorezm and Turkestan.

This decision was opposed by some prominent party members, most notably Chicherin, the People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR. In the period between April and October 1924 Chicherin sent a series of letters to the top officials in Moscow, including Stalin, Zinov’ev, and Trotskiy, expressing his concern with the process of delimitation as damaging the relations with both the West and the Muslim world. In his opinion, “the liquidation of independent Bukhara, one of the most honorable and popular traditional Muslim states, whose independence we promised to maintain in our agreement with Afghanistan, would without doubt result in great wrath in the Muslim world and a strong movement against us” (Karasar, 2002: 205). Chicherin also quotes Faizulla Khojaev, according to him ‘a very enthusiastic supporter of national delimitation’, as saying that the project was rushed and that “the liquidation of the traditional holy Bukhara may create a serious ‘fermentation’ – unrest if not more, among the city-

dweller middle-bourgeois masses, small commercial classes and big dikham-farmers” (Karasar, 2002: 206).

Chicherin tried to warn the comrades in Kremlin that according to a report by Comrade German, “the main initiators of the national delimitation -- the Uzbek commercial bourgeois – hope to get rid of poor areas and create a large cotton producing region, which would provide them with commercial opportunities” (Karasar, 2002: 207). Khojaev was a son of a wealthy Bukharan merchant and could act as a lobbyist of commercial interests. Above all, however, the creation of Uzbekistan was a compromise between maintaining independence and being absorbed into Turkestan. The option of a unified Soviet Turkestan never appealed to Faizulla Khojaev, even in its early pan-Turkist incarnation promoted by Turar Ryskulov. To him Turkestan was a foreign place and one subordinated to Russia too. Through his support of the national principle for delimitation, Khojaev succeeded in his efforts of making Bukhara/Uzbekistan a member state of the USSR.

### **Analysing the rationale for Soviet border-drawing in Central Asia**

The process of formation of Tajik and Uzbek identities needs to be analysed not in isolation but within the wider regional context of the events and processes taking place in the region in 1920s, including the process of definition of such designations as ‘Kazakh’, ‘Kyrgyz’, ‘Turkmen’, ‘Karakalpak’, ‘Uygur’ and so on. As it’s been mentioned before, the Revolution of 1917 has set in motion complex processes of redefinition of what was considered relevant political identities, whereby former excluded groups (such as *jadids* and local communists) were now given prominence while the discourse of the dominant groups of the pre-revolutionary period were being marginalised and delegitimised (Soucek 2000: 210-211). The articulation of the answer to the question “Who are ‘the people’ in Turkestan?” and “What is a ‘nation’?” in 1920s was based on the process of negotiation between Bolsheviks on the one hand and local reformists (*jadids* and ‘*natsional*’-communists) and traditionalist elites (*ulama* and ‘*basmachi*’) on the other (Khalid 2001). ‘The common people’ also took a part in negotiating their identities locally (Haugen 2003).

The competing accounts of the rationale for the delimitation in the region are in large part determined by the fundamental disagreement regarding the nature of the Soviet state. Difference between different interpretations is fundamentally based in what the implied definition of 'the people' a particular writer has in mind. On the one hand, those who see the Soviet Union as primarily an heir of the Russian empire, explain the delimitation as a 'divide and rule' policy, while the people are mostly defined as 'Muslim' (Bennigsen 1983, Encausse 1979, Allworth 1990). The 'divide and rule' thesis, which portrayed the Soviet state as an omnipotent power victimising local population, was advocated by Turkestani émigré community's accounts of the event (Baymirza Hayit and Mustafa Chokaev).

The resulting 'nationalities' and boundaries, according to this school of thought, were 'artificial' as opposed to 'genuine' identity of 'Ulama' or 'Turkestani' and therefore not only an unjust and misguided colonial policy but also pregnant with potential for revolt and inter-ethnic strife as a result of the desire of the people to realise their 'true' identity (Wimbush 1984, Baldauf 1991). Sovietologists adopted the vocabulary of constructivism to delegitimise the Soviet definition of 'the people', but kept the essentialist conception of primordialists in their assessment of the implications of the policies today (Cox 1998). This school of thought also presupposes an omnipotent and omnipresent state or the 'Centre' and a somewhat schizophrenic conception of a Homo Sovieticus as a silent conformist and a secret dissident at the same time (Yurchak 2006, Mitchell 1990). The arguments of the Sovietologists have been somewhat uncritically adopted by some of the post-Soviet scholars of Central Asia both from within the region (for example, Ilkhamov 2002) and from outside (Roy 2000).

On the other hand, those who perceive the USSR to be a modernising and centralising state, see it as a practical measure to improve governmentability of the region by rationalising administrative-economic borders and gaining the good will of the local population through promotion of local cultures. 'The people' within this interpretation of the delimitation process are defined in ethnic and class terms. The Soviet accounts delimitation were rooted in the communist class thinking and theory of consecutive formations based on the mode of production, as well as on the notion that the world is divided into a finite number of 'peoples' which strove to self-determination (Gordienko 1959, Yakubovskaya 1960, Vahabov 1961, Landa 1964, Ahmedzhanov 1989, 1995,

Masov 2000). Soviet anthropology developed a 'theory of ethnos', which displayed primordialist thinking to a large extent, but cannot be reduced to purely organismic model (Slezkine 1996, Abashin 2006). Indeed, the radically organic theory of ethnos developed by Gumilev (1989) in late Soviet period was rejected by the scholarly community (but appears to be rather popular in Central Asia). The Soviet policies actually displayed a curious mix of primordialist beliefs and constructivist mindset and practices.

While there was a definite continuity between Russian imperial and Soviet rule in Central Asia, it is debatable to what extent the Soviet Union was indeed an empire (Beissinger 2006, Khalid 2006, Edgar and Blitstein 2006; Northrop 2004; Suny & Martin 2001; Hirsch 2000, Slezkine 2000). Some Western scholars hold an opinion that Soviet Union was in that respect no different from other modernising states of that period in world history, or that it was at least a special kind of an empire -- an 'affirmative action empire', or an 'empire of nations', characterised by 'ethnophilia', a love of ethnic particularity (Slezkine 1994, Hirsch 2000, Khalid 2006, Edgar 2006). Another important contribution of this group of scholars is recognition of some if limited agency of the local actors in the delimitation process (Sengupta 2000, Haugen 2003, Khalid 2001, Fragner 1994, and Chika 2001).

To sum up, the debates regarding motivations behind delimitation are highly complex and are shaped by conventional wisdoms regarding the Soviet nationalities policies that have roots in the ideological struggle of the Cold War (Sengupta 2000, Abashin 2006, Haugen 2003, Schoeberlein 2004). It can be concluded from a review of literature, that the Bolsheviks in Moscow as well as local intelligentsia and to some extent 'common' people of Central Asia articulated a concept of ethnic national identity that was compatible with the Soviet liberation project. Although there was a certain degree of uneasiness among communists about possibility of 'bad' bourgeois-type nationalism emerging out of the self-determination agenda, the Soviet system promoted 'ethnic particularism' as a means to promote the development of good ("oppressed-nations") nationalisms during the New Economic Policy (NEP) years (Slezkine 1994).



## **The curious case of disappearing and reappearing Sarts**

There is ongoing debate on the nature of Russian Orientalism, and whether the concerns outlined by Edward Said (1978) are applicable to the specific historical and geographic context of Russia's encounter with its 'Orient' (Khalid 2000, Knight 2000, Todorova 2000 Brower & Lazzerini 1997). In line with Said's discussion of the close connection between knowledge and power in imperialist projects,<sup>2</sup> Tsarist orientalist ethnographers and linguists that followed the troops and administration made a first attempt to categorise the colonial population according to the ethnic principle (Brower 1997: 115). Benedict Anderson and Edward Said pointed out the importance of the practice of naming and categorising the subject populations for the colonial enterprise and the impact of such classification for the on the emergence of national identity among the colonial people (Anderson 1991, Said 1978). Very much like other European Orientalist traditions, Tsarist Russia' orientalist school was based on a combination of notions of anthropological superiority, cultural distancing, racism, and religious dogma. It was an important "tool of Russian rule in Turkestan" after the tsarist army conquered the region in late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Brower 1997, 114). The ethnographers, historians, linguists, statisticians, administrators, and even artists of the Russian empire used an eclectic list of criteria to deal with the diversity of subject population (Slezkine 1997, Holquist 2001, Sanders 1999). In addition to the linguistic criteria, Russian ethnographers used a great variety of data subsumed under the categories of "sustenance, sex, and settlement" (Slezkine 1997: 40). However, Russian Orientalism was arguably also greatly influenced by the European ideas of nationalism at the time of the conquest of Turkestan between 1870s and the 1917 revolution (Tolz 2005: 127). As a result they proceeded from the assumption that the world is naturally divided into a finite number of ethnic groups that seek to form a national state for themselves. In their pursuit for scientific truth they followed a rather objectivist approach to identifying

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Said uses the term 'Orientalism' in three different ways, all of which for him are "interdependent". Firstly, Said refers to 'Orientalism' as an academic study of the 'Oriental' peoples and the places and the institutions of learning and research associated with such academic discipline. Secondly, Orientalism is "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'", which serves as a starting point for political and social theories, artistic, poetic and other popular cultural representations. Finally, thirdly, 'Orientalism' in Said's parlance, refers to the "corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (pp. 2-3).

'ethnic' groups in Turkestan. However, the reality on the ground often left the Orientalists perplexed, frustrated and confused (Haugen 2003, Abashin 2007, Brower 1997).

Different labels emerged out of various encounters between groups and exonyms (ethnonyms used by 'outside' groups) did not always correspond to the endonyms (autonyms) of the groups. Group names were also used contextually for self and other identification depending on the situational needs and types of interactions. For instance, the designation of the locals as the 'Muslims' emerged out the colonial encounter and served as a pseudo-ethnic term to differentiate 'European' colonisers from the various indigenous peoples (Brower 1997).

The concept of ethnicity in its modern understanding was largely foreign to the inhabitants of the region, apart from *Jadid* reformers.<sup>3</sup> Rather, their self-consciousness was a complex alloy of various overlapping identities of local, confessional, class and/or professional nature. Multilingualism was a norm. While there existed group names of the contemporary titular (name-giving) nationalities of the states in the region (Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen, etc), they were not the most important or the first identity given by the locals to their Russian interlocutors. In this chapter we will concentrate of designations 'Tajik', 'Sart' and 'Uzbek', which confused the Russian scholars perhaps the most because they "crossed expected boundaries that, according to the orientalists, were not relevant or decisive for what was to be considered a 'nation' or a 'people'" (Haugen 2003: 31).

The case of a mysterious disappearance of a major category which the colonial administration used to designate millions of its subjects is a perfect example of how identity categories were manipulated in order to fit the purposes of governing the populations. In the Tsarist colonial census conducted in 1897, the number of a category of people called 'Sarts' exceeded that of 'Uzbeks' in the three main oblasts of Turkestan (Haugen 2003: 34). However, 'Sarts' disappeared completely as a census category in the

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<sup>3</sup>*Jadid* movement (from Arabic 'Usuli Jadid' [New Way]) was a reformist enlightenment movement in the Muslim provinces of the Russian empire. The Jadids advocated a form of 'defensive modernisation' as a means to overcome the region's backwardness and maintain independence. Some of the Jadids joined the Soviet government during the first decade of the Soviet rule in Central Asia. They were subsequently prosecuted as national-bourgeois elements during the Stalinist purges of 1930s. Adeeb Khalid is an excellent source on history of Jadidism (See Khalid 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2007).

1926 Soviet all-Union census (Abashin 2009: 254). What was considered the principal category during the time of Tsarist administration was dismissed within the period of less than thirty years. This demonstrates how what was considered legitimate and relevant identity categories was being rapidly re-evaluated within that period. The choice of criteria for designating a certain group as a nation or a 'people' depended on a number of factors, including the scholars' and politicians' ideological and political preferences, their education and personal experiences, and on the circumstances of their encounters with the subject populations. However, the period is also characterised by a massive political upheaval whereby various political groups engaged in the contestation of the right to speak on behalf of certain groups, a struggle for the power to redefine the meanings of all sorts of classifications and designations. The designation 'Sart' could play many roles in this political process of contestation due to its ambiguity, but it also proved too ambiguous of an element for the task at hand and was discarded as a result. In my opinion, 'Sart' was to a large extent a floating (or an 'empty') signifier with a plethora of connotations and that fact itself allowed it to be dissolved by administrative fiat as 'pseudo' or even an irrelevant and offensive category.

In an example quoted by Brower (1997), a recorded conversation with a Turkestani subject reveals that the locals used multiple designations to refer both to themselves and to others: "I'm a Kirgiz", says a native [nomadic tribesman -- DB] from the shores of Issyk-Kul, "but I'm an Uzbek". The puzzled ethnographers noted in exasperation that "even Sarts affirm 'We are Uzbeks'" (129). The common tribal ancestry connected the 'Kirgiz' and the 'Sart', but the latter's settled way of life differentiated them. At the same time, the meaning of the term 'Sart' differed in various localities and people in different provinces would identify themselves by the name of the place first (Samarkandi, Bukhari, Qoqandi, and so on). Another version suggests that because the states in the region were governed by the descendants of the Uzbek Shaybanid dynasty<sup>4</sup>, people identified as 'Uzbek' because they considered themselves as Uzbek subjects

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<sup>4</sup> Shaybanids are the descendants of Shayban (Shiban), who claimed to be a direct descendant of Chenghis Khan. Muhammad Shaybani (ruled 1500-10), who gave his name to the Shaybanid dynasty, conquered Samarkand, Herat (for a time) and Bukhara from the control of the last Timurid, Muhammad Zahiriddin Bobur. The Shaybanids ruled the Khanate of Bukhara from 1505 until 1598 and the Khanate of Khorazm(Khiva) from 1511 until 1695. They are considered to be the first rulers of the region that identified with the common tribal designation of 'Uzbek' (O'zbek), which later became the referant to all dynasties descendant from the Shaybanids as well as their subject populations (Soucek 2000: 149).

(Schoeberlein 1996: 13). Therefore, the term was not used in an 'ethnic' sense as it is applied today.

Ethnographers strived to identify objective grounds to differentiate between Sarts, Uzbeks and all the others. The confusion surrounding the term 'Sart' is illustrative of the imperial preoccupation with neat 'scientific' classification of peoples, things, and social phenomena. The debate concerning the 'true' identity of Sarts continued through the Tsarist period and into the early Soviet period, and has been recently resurrected in the post-independence Central Asian states (especially Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). The debate was regarding whether the Sarts were an ethnic group distinct enough to constitute a separate category, or whether they were 'really' Uzbeks or Tajiks. But since there was no agreement on what words 'Tajik' and 'Uzbek' meant in the first place, the desired clarity of classification could not be achieved (Brower 1997: 129). Schoerberlein (1994) argues that, indeed, even to this day, "the 'national' identities indicated by the terms 'O'zbek' and 'Tajik'... have not become exclusive", and that "many other overlapping concepts of descent, region, religion and other cultural groups continue to structure the lives of Central Asians" (iii). In other words, a complex hybridity of identity defies any attempts to pigeon-hole group and to neatly demarcate the borders of identity.

The term 'Sart' combined in itself many binary opposites that served as identifying categories in classification efforts at the time as well as the many connotations of those opposites. It was an ultimate hybrid identification term, the different meanings of which were called upon according to the circumstances of interaction. Thus, for example, Russian orientalist Samoilovich in 1910 wrote: "Following the Arab conquest, the original Iranian population of Central Asia was given the name 'Tajiks' by the nomadic Turks in the North, a name that they adopted. In the course of time, and no later than the time of the Mongol conquest, the Turks again gave this population a new name, 'Sarts', although this did not replace the first one. Prior to this, the term 'Sart' had not had any ethnic meaning. Consequently, the ancestors of today's Sarts were by blood and language Iranians" (Haugen 2003: 31). Samoilovich thus recognises that Tajik is an exonym arising from an encounter with an outsider group to differentiate between the local groups. He also recognises that previous uses of the term were non-ethnic, yet he insists in equating 'Sart' with 'Tajik' based on the criteria of language and 'blood.'

Other Russian scholars, such as Bartol'd noted the evolution of the meaning of the designation and emphasised the gradual fading out of the Iranian dimension through mixing of 'Sarts' with Turkic-speakers of the region beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century after the 'Uzbek' tribes conquered the region in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Bartol'd 1963: 468). According to their analysis, designation 'Sart' was not equivalent to 'Tajik' but rather meant sedentary population under Uzbek (dynastic) rule. 'Sart' was believed to designate the urban 'Turks' as opposed to nomadic Turks and Persian-speaking 'Tajiks'. With time, as well, people started referring to themselves as 'Uzbek' to indicate their status as subjects of the khanates ruled by an 'Uzbek' dynasty regardless of their lifestyle, linguistic practices or physical appearances.

Such mixing of categories and casual substitutions of terms is evident in the quote from Russian scholar Khoroshin: "The population of the Turkestan krai consists of two peoples [*narodnosti*]: the settled Tajiks and the half nomad Uzbeks, who in their turn have had great influence on the Tajiks, turning parts of them into Sarts, a settled people of Tajik origin speaking the Uzbek language" (Haugen 2003: 32). In the same text we find reference to "Sart-speaking Tajiks" (meaning 'Uzbek-speaking Tajiks' and later on 'Uzbeks' are described as "partly settled, partly half-nomad and partly nomad" (but difference between 'Sart' and 'Uzbek' is earlier explained as that of settled versus nomadic lifestyles) demonstrating the fluidity of identities, and actual undecidability of belonging to either group. Muriel Atkin somewhat adds to the confusion by pointing out that "Tajiks and Uzbeks alike were known as *Sarts*", and adding that "the name 'Tajik' was applied occasionally to Uzbeks as a synonym for *Sart*" (Atkin 1993: 152).

We can see that different criteria (language, race, mode of living) are applied in order to differentiate the groups – main ones being binary pairs 'urban/rural', 'sedentary/nomad' and 'Iranian/Turkic'. Each of these binary opposites was also associated with a cluster of associated connotations organised hierarchically with the first one in the pair being superior to the other half. Sedentary and urban lifestyles and modes of production were associated with progress, modernity, degree of 'advancement' along the evolutionary continuum of civilisational development (Khodarkovsky 1997, Slezkine 1997). Tribal identification and rural lifestyle were associated with waves of Turkic and Mongolian invasions that in the Russian narrative destroyed the great city-civilisations of 'indigenous' Iranian-speaking peoples of the

‘Aryan’ stock (Vambery 1914: 153-154; Shozimov 2003: 23, Usmonov 2006: 37). Within this discourse, Sarts were identified with urban culture as opposed to rural ‘Uzbeks’. Samoilovich also founded the Uzbek-Sart distinction in the social organisation with Sarts characterised by absence or loss of the traditional tribal consciousness, and Uzbeks self-identification being organised according to clan-tribal principles (Abashin 2009: 254).

Some Russian Orientalists perceived ‘Sarts’ as a group distinct enough to be considered a separate ‘people’. Thus Anatolii Bogdanov conducted extensive craniological studies in order to ‘prove’ that Uzbek and Sart constituted different people, while Nikolai Ostroumov established a ‘Sart literary language’ (Brower 1997: 129; Abashin 2009: 267). After the revolution local intellectuals such as *jadids* Mahmudhoja Behbudi and Sherali Lapin objected to the use of ‘Sart’ as a designation for local population based on this perception of the term as an imperialist insult (Ilkhamov 2002: 79).<sup>5</sup>

In the end, the undecidability of the sign ‘Sart’, the lack of an ultimate referent led to its elimination as a legitimate census category. ‘Sart’ as a word is still found in Central Asian languages and recently found its way back into the academic debates, once again thanks to its ambiguity. Sergei Abashin has argued that in the post-independence Central Asia, especially in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, ‘Sarts’ are ‘remembered’ or ‘forgotten’ depending on the ideological and political agendas of the scholars (2009: 54). ‘Remembering’ Sarts allows to destabilise the long-established national identity labels along which the political boundaries were drawn by the Soviet state. The almost impossibility to draw a clear distinction between Uzbeks and Tajiks is most clearly reflected in the so-called problem of Sarts, which became most politically salient during the years of national territorial delimitation in Central Asia. It demonstrates most graphically, that in the period before the national territorial delimitation, which was supposed to be a direct process of national self-determination in the region, the prevalent forms of self-identification were not necessarily ethnic.

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<sup>5</sup> I have a personal memory of seeing a dictionary of ‘Sart language’ at the Tashkent historical museum’s exposition. Within the same exposition were some examples of the use of ‘Sart’ as colonialist pejorative designation for local population, as demonstrated by photographs of signs reading “No dogs or Sarts” in the parks of the colonial cities’ European quarters. Still used in the south of Kyrgyzstan by the Kyrgyz to refer to the Uzbeks the word has preserved its pejorative connotation of the past.

In fact, as Sergei Abashin (2007) writes, the main forms of self-consciousness can be illustrated by four groups that gradually “fell out” of or never made into census categories. These groups are Kypchaks, Hodja, Samarkandi and Sarts, corresponding respectively to kinship-tribal, class, local and socio-economical forms of identity. The latter, Sart identity, meant “an urban dweller, a craftsman or a merchant” (Abashin 2007: 25). It therefore indicated more to the way of life rather than ethnicity of a person. Sarts could be either Turki or Farsi speakers or bilingual and could have different phenotypes. Indeed, as a Russian ethnographer Patkanov of the Tsarist colonial period is quoted to have said: “it appears a rather complex, if at all possible, undertaking to draw a line of distinction between these [Uzbeks, Tajiks and Sarts] three ethnic groups (*narodnosti*)” (quoted in Abashin 2007: 135).

If one takes a look at consecutive censuses conducted in the region between the end of XIX century and the national territorial delimitation in 1920s (namely, the censuses of 1887, 1917, 1920 and 1926), an extremely interesting picture emerges. Sarts as a census group went from being the most numerous one to total disappearance in 1926 census. The censuses data (especially the last one conducted by the Soviet authorities in 1926) were used as empirical evidence that determined the territories and thus the resources and status given to an ethnic group at the Union level. Most Sarts were recorded as Uzbeks in the census of 1926. Thus, Sarts as a group underwent a transformation from a rather elastic category, which could include all those groups whose ethnic belonging was unidentifiable in late XIX century, to mean “Uzbek” - the new common denominator that was chosen a unifying title for various tribal, class and local groups (including Lokay, Barlos, Kypchak, Hodja, Samarkandi, etc) – in 1926 onwards. Abashin describes, for instance, how the population of Mindon village with 36 years (between 1890 and 1926), according to the official data has changed its identity twice. First, in the end of XIX – beginning of XX century the Mindonians, who were initially described in the statistics as comprised of the “Tajiks”, “Kashgaris”, “Sarts” and “Kyrgyz”, were all recorded as “Sarts”; only to be transformed ‘magically’ into “Uzbeks” in 1920s (37-38).

Thus, within a life-time of one generation, without any significant change of the composition of the population (i.e. no in- or out-migration), the Mindonians either dramatically underwent two major shifts in self-consciousness or simply changed their

census categories thanks to the policies and practices determined by political developments in the region. Obviously, both the census taking practices and the wide propaganda work among the population had its effects on the census outcomes, however, it would be too simplistic to argue that the imposition of “Uzbek” as a unifying category was entirely arbitrary and forced. It followed a rather simple logic that if the country is to be called “Uzbekistan”, its population must be “Uzbek”. Despite the diversity of the Central Asian society and multiplicity of self-identification terms, “Uzbek” was perhaps the most acceptable common name for the various groups, which did not have strong ethnic self-consciousness. As ever in Central Asia we observe that in the space between the dichotomies of the nomads and the settled, the Turkic and the Iranian, the urban and the rural there are many categories that are transitory and undetermined.

### **Nationalising state and the return of the Sarts**

Nationalism is a political ideology that constitutes a distinct community of people that seek to politicise that distinction by establishing a territorial state. The Central Asian states’ domestic and foreign policies are often analysed as those of ‘nationalising states’ (Brubaker 1996). Graham Smith (1998) describes the ‘nationalising state’ as the one that (1) essentialises, ‘primordialises’ a nation, depicts ethnic identities as linear, constant and homogenous; (2) ‘historicises’ nation, presenting it as ancient, with its ‘golden century’ and national heroes; and (3) ‘totalises’ the nation, ignoring individual differences and depicting a nation as a ‘collective person’ with collective memory, collective homeland, and so on (15-16). In Central Asia we observe such tendencies to primordialise, totalise and historicise the state (Bohr 1998: 136). The nationalising states of the region have built on the Soviet tradition of ‘ethnogenesis’ to claim ancient roots, belonging to the current homeland and therefore a right to sovereign statehood (Abashin 2006). As a result, history remains a highly politicised enterprise, often led by the state and/or by nationalistically-minded scholars. ‘Remembering’ and ‘forgetting’ certain episodes, personalities and interpretations of the past is part of this process of historicising of a nationalising state.



Sergei Abashin (2009) has argued that in the post-independence period we observe in Central Asia a collision between the desire to 'remember' and the desire to 'forget' Sarts (254). Indeed, remembering Sarts for Tajik scholars and politicians is consistent with their vision of national delimitation and allow to destabilise the established understanding of Uzbek identity. As a result we observe great attention being paid to the issue of Sarts by Tajik scholars in 2000's, for whom the question is a means to continue the discussion over the meaning of 'Tajik' identity and to return to the issue of interpretation of the history of the 1920s. Predictably, Rahim Masov was in the forefront of this discussion. In his *Tadzhiki: Vitesneniie i assimiliatsiia* [Tajiks: Displacement and Assimilation] (2003), Masov writes that Sarts are "a mixed peoples [narodnost']" which emerged as a results of "merger" of Iranian-speaking population with Turko-Mongol "aliens [prishel'tsami]", however, the "ratio [primes'] of the Tajik blood was much greater in Sarts" (36-37). To Masov, as usual, 'Iranian-speaking' is synonymous to 'Tajik', and the question of 'blood' or race is decisive in determining one's 'true' national belonging. Moreover, he uses the usual dichotomy of 'local' versus 'alien invaders' in order to represent anything associated with 'Turko-Mongol' invasion as diluting the essential identity of the 'Iranian-speaking' peoples/'Tajiks'. This objectivist approach is also observed in his earlier comments on the Sart issue: "Sarts were essentially not only Turko-Tajik half-bloods [metis], but the absolute majority of Sart population were actually Tajiks, who due to a set of objective and subjective circumstances forgot Tajik language, their own ethnic origins (Masov 1995: 62). In this interpretation, one's identity is determined not by one's language or even self-identification, but solely by race, and people are describes as either 'half-bloods' or 'pure' Tajiks based on that principle alone.

Another Tajik scholar , Mirbabaev (2002) writes in an article with a self-explanatory title "On the term 'Sart' as a synonym of ethnonym 'Tajik'" that "Sarts were Tajiks, and not Uzbeks or Kyrgyz" (pp. 185-6). In his interpretations the 'Sart' language "consisted of Tajik words mixed in with Uzbek dialects" (191). He further notes that because Sarts were in contact with Turkic peoples they "developed bilingualism" (192). However, despite this, Mirbabaev insists that it would be erroneous to "view the Sarts as a separate ethnic group" (194). Mirbabaev follows the same nationalistic agenda and

objectivist approach to identity as Masov, but bases it (rather unconvincingly) on linguistic characteristics of the group.

Finally, Shozimov in his *Tadzhikskaja identichnost' i gosudarstvennoie stroitel'stvo v Tadzhikistane* [Tajik identity and state-building in Tajikistan] (2003) argues that "it is within the different interpretations of the term that the key to understanding both Tajik and Uzbek identity lies" (88). Shozimov points out contradictory criteria used in defining the three groups (Sarts, Tajiks and Uzbeks): "If the criteria for defining the Tajik identity are the Tajik (Farsi) language and the settled way of life, then Sarts, according to the majority of researchers, possessed the same characteristics. In this case, what are the criteria differentiating Tajik identity from that of the identity of the Sarts?" (87-88). On the other hand, he continues, if Sarts are settled Uzbeks, then what is the difference between the Tajiks and the settled Uzbeks? He proposes to look for the solution to the problem of sarts "not in the view [this term, 'sart'] as a constant ethnic and social unit, but as a hanging phenomenon with different meaning across different historical periods" (89). The Russian authorities tried to define the Sarts as a separate ethnic category, but up to the beginning of the twentieth century Sarts remained a special socio-cultural group, which preserved both within Uzbeks and Tajiks and which united them.

Within the Uzbek academic circles the desire 'to forget' the 'Sarts' prevailed until recently, since the discussion would inevitably bring up the non-Turkic roots of the Uzbeks and to resume the debates regarding the Tajik claims on the cultural heritage and territory of Uzbekistan. Thus, for example, Ahmadali Asqarov writes: "Up to the 1920s, the supporters of the Indo-European conception characteristic especially to the Russian orientalism, defined the term 'Uzbek' narrowly as including only the Shaybanid Uzbeks, not recognising the local Uzbek-speaking population (so-called 'Sarts' – ancient Turkic-speaking population of Mawaraunahr and Khorezm, although the term 'Uzbek' included both of these parts of the Uzbek people" (1997: 75). Asqarov admits that the population called 'Sarts' did not have Uzbek self-consciousness, but points to the data indicating they spoke a Turkic ("old-Uzbek", according to Asqarov) language. The language here is the defining characteristic that allows Asqarov to retrospectively project Uzbek identity onto the Sart group. The same strategy of equalising

Iranian/Farsi with Tajik as used by Masov is followed by Asqarov in equalising Turkic with “old Uzbek”.

Other Uzbek historians and ethnographers mention Sarts as part of the ‘sub-ethnos’ groups that contributed to the ‘ethnogenesis’ of the Uzbek people. For instance, Shaniyazov in *Protsessi formirovaniia uzbekskogo naroda* [The Processes of Formation of the Uzbek People] (2001) mentions ‘Sart’ as one of the terms used for Uzbeks in 18-19<sup>th</sup> centuries with reference to Bartol’d (415). Djaborov, who wrote an ethnographic work on the Uzbeks (1994: 2007) lists Sarts as one of the ‘subethos’ groups within the Uzbek ethnos in 19<sup>h</sup> century, describing them as “the descendants of the ancient population of the region” without any reference to language (2007: 32-33).

In this respect the publication of the *Archaeology of Uzbek Identity* by Alisher Ilkhamov (2002) was a surprising exception to the rule of silence on the Sart issue in Uzbekistan. In 2002 the Open Society Institute sponsored the publication of a book, which instantly became a rarity since only a thousand of copied were printed. The book entitled *The Ethnic Atlas of Uzbekistan* immediately attracted attention and stirred controversy in the academic circles of Uzbekistan. The volume was comprised of three sections: “Ethnic Minorities”, “the Uzbeks”, and the “Review Articles” (including an overview of the ethno-cultural centres functioning in Uzbekistan and a piece on the cemeteries of the various ethnic groups). Alisher Ilkhamov, the director of the OSI office in Uzbekistan at the time, edited the volume and authored its most controversial section, the one dealing with the emergence of modern Uzbek identity, the English language version of which later was republished as an article entitled *The Archaeology of Uzbek Identity* in *Central Asian Survey* (Ilkhamov 2004). In his *Archaeology* Ilkhamov called for application of the constructivist ideas on nationalism in Central Asia. Although Ilkhamov’s call in itself was quite bold and innovative in itself, he uses constructivist concepts to write a postcolonial critique of the Russian and Soviet nationalities policies and as an attempt to come up with an improved, more inclusive design for Uzbek nation. In his attempts to move away from the received wisdoms of the Central Asian school of ethnography and history, Ilkhamov sometimes confuses the constructivist theoretical critique with the polemical language of Sovietology.

Ilkhamov dates the emergence of *modern* Uzbek identity to the creation of the Uzbek SSR within the Soviet Union in 1924. This came in direct contradiction of the prevailing methodology of 'ethnogenesis' practiced by the Uzbek ethnologists and historians alike that dated Uzbek identity as far into the antiquity as I millennium BC to the times when tribes identified by them as 'proto-Turks' inhabited the region (Asqarov 2007, Kamoliddin 2004). Ilkhamov puts forward a thesis that the modern Uzbek identity can be traced to three main historic ethnic components: the Dashti-Kypchak nomadic tribes that migrated into the region in early XVI century, the local Turkic tribes of the Chaghatay and Oghuz lineage, and, finally, the so-called Sarts, or the "urban Turkic-speaking population, who did not trace their identity by tribal affiliation by the XIX century" (Ilkhamov 2005). He, however, categorically differentiates the Uzbeks that identify as such today and the Uzbeks that lived in the region before the national delimitation and the creation of the Uzbek SSR in 1924. So far from the traditional representations of the emergence of the Uzbek identity as an "objective natural-historic process", Ilkhamov argues that it was tightly intertwined with the efforts on the part of the local elites and intelligentsia, such as *jadids* and the local members of the Communist Party, as well as the apparatchiks representing the central Communist Party.

Uzbek academia did not react to the publication immediately. However, in 2004 a group of senior scholars from the Institute of History of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences published a review on the *Atlas* and accused its authors of lack of professionalism and necessary expertise and dismissed the publication as an example of "what an ethnic atlas of Uzbekistan should not be like" (Alimova, Arifhanova & Kamoliddin 2004). They dismissed the position of Ilkhamov on the 'recent' (16<sup>th</sup> century) emergence of the Uzbek nation the discussion in the Russian journal *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie* (2006). Ilkhamov's critics, who have internalised the highly negative Soviet meaning of such labels as 'pan-Turkism' and 'pan-Islamism', see his use of the words in connection to the Jadid leaders as offensive, referring to them as 'accusations'.

In an internet-based publication Alikhan Aman deals with the problem of 'correct' designation of Sarts by attempting to prove Turkic etymology of the word 'Sart' itself. Once again Turkic is automatically assumed to be equivalent to 'Uzbek'. Aman concludes by saying that the term was an exonym and had a lot of negative connotations. As a

result it was rejected by the local population as a self-designation (2007). It is not entirely clear from the writing of the official Uzbek historians and ethnographers whether they see the 'Sart issue' as part of a conscious policy of 'divide and rule', an element of struggle between various elite groups, or simply as a manifestation of the inferior knowledge and understanding of the region by the outsiders. It is obvious, however, that the issue is highly politicised (although sometimes personal antipathies come into place in such debates) and the stakes are high in the game of assigning 'Sarts' as equivalent to either modern 'Tajik' or 'Uzbek' designation.

## ***2. Nationalising states, ideology of national independence***

Ideologies and politics of nationalism have largely defined the ideal-type model of political units within the international system in the twentieth century. 'The people' across the world have mostly been defined as 'national people'. Theories of origins of nations, as discussed briefly in Chapter two, are based on two main opposing metaphors of society: organismic and mechanical. Within the organismic understanding of society, 'the people' are conceptualised as a collective organismic body of a collective person (Neumann 2004). This metaphor gains legitimacy from its conceptual connectedness to the realm of 'nature'. Within the mechanical metaphoric frame the society is conceived in terms of a Newtonian system with forces acting upon objects, checks and balances, and structures.

Related to this metaphor is the construction metaphor, whereby society is the subject to 'engineering', nations and states are 'built', 'reconstructed' or 'collapse'. This idea of 'the people' sees society as an artifice, or an imitation of nature. Although these are the two extremes on the continuum of possible metaphors of states and societies, both metaphors have some important features in common in that they envision polities as complete closed systems, the proper functioning of which is governed by some unalterable 'laws' (Rigney 2001, Canovan 2005).

There has also been much cross-fertilisation between the two metaphors, with each borrowing from the other. For instance, within theoretical debates on nations and

nationalism, the followers of the 'primordialist' (organismic metaphor) and 'constructivist' schools have often resorted to the categories and the language used by the opposing school. Constructivists who protest the essentialising of identity often retreat into using the same essentialising language, talking of nations as if they were stable, coherent and unitary actors (Brubaker & Cooper 2000, Abashin 2009). 'Identity' becomes something one 'possesses' and that functions as a motivating force behind group action (Katzenstein 1996, Neumann 1999, Steele 2008). For some primordialists as well, the fact that nations are constructed is irrelevant to how a nation is conceptualised once the 'construction process' is complete. In the sphere of politics, nationalists despite their romantic notions of an organic nation with roots in the mists of antiquity have undertaken conscious efforts to 'build' nations, to adopt policies and create institutions that enhance national consciousness (Slezkine 1994, Suny & Martin 2001, Verdery 1991).

The narratives of the national following the organic, mechanic and a hybrid metaphors can be summed up as the awakening of the 'Sleeping Beauty', complete substitution of nature with artifice a la 'Stepford wife' or a monstrous 'Bride of Frankenstein'. Both of these basic metaphors or their combination can and have been applied productively by actors located at different points along the political continuum. An expert I interviewed while in Tajikistan commented that the state after independence had a simulacrum character [*simuliativnii kharakter*], and was akin to the description of a creature supposedly born by a Tsarina in Pushkin's fairy tale *The Tale about Tsar Soltan*: "neither son nor daughter, but an unknown beastly". This humorous self-Orientalisation is very close to the view of post-colonial statehood advanced by Robert Jackson (1990).

My working hypothesis at the time was that Central Asian states, and in particular, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan 'simulated' sovereignty through their interactions with one another. These two countries seemed like an interesting case to me for a number of reasons. Firstly, they were both former 'colonised' people under the Russian and then Soviet rule and became independence without actually really fighting for it. Secondly, in case of Tajikistan there was a history of double-colonisation- both by Moscow and Tashkent till 1929. Late 1980s and 1990s saw the rise in number of voices speaking against the perceived Uzbek domination of Tajik politics through Leninabad (Khujand) party elite, there was a more open expression of resentment regarding the treatment of

the 'Tajik' minority in Uzbekistan and the loss of Bukhara and Samarkand reflected in revisionist historiography, art and literature (Guboglo & Chicherina 1990, Khudonazar 2004). Thirdly, Tajikistan went through what John Heathershaw called a 'complex crisis of decolonisation' in early 1990s (2009). Civil wars are interpreted in political system as the breakdown in the normal politics, as a state of exception, and the original 'state of nature'. A territory where there is no one single sovereign claiming the exclusive legitimate right to use violence is understood to be a 'failed' or 'collapsed' state. The fear of such state failure and the desire to prevent 'Balkanisation'/'Afghanisation' (meaning 'Tajikisation') of the entire region has become for both the Central Asian leaders and the observers from the outside alike a policy objective and an ideology.

The notion of statehood (*davlatdori/davlatchilik*) has become a normative goal of politics. This goal, however, has been strangely depoliticised. The Ideology of National Independence/Sovereignty [*Milliy Istiqlol Mafkurasi*] advocated by the regime in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan's Ideology of National Unity both advance the construction of a strong authoritative centralised state as an end in itself (March 2002, 2003; Heathershaw 2009; Vose' et al 2007; Shozimov 2003; Mamadazimov 1996; Alimova and Rtveladze 2001). Such goals as 'stability', 'unity', 'peace', and 'development' are declared to be at the heart of the nation-building ideologies. The political space is thus depoliticised as no one can disagree that stability, peace and development are indeed desirable common good. The opposition within such authoritative discourse is only acceptable if it is 'constructive' and helps the government achieve the desired goals on its agenda.

Modern ideological constructions are inherently unstable as they lack a transcendental master signifier representing the 'truth'. In his work on the authoritative discourse articulation during the period of late Socialism, Yurchak (2006) explains why the communist party's discourse lost its basis and as a result also its credibility:

One of the central contradictions of socialism is a version of what Claude Lefort called a general paradox within the ideology of modernity: the split between *ideological enunciation* (which reflects the theoretical ideals of the Enlightenment) and *ideological rule* (manifest in the practical concerns of the modern state's political authority). The paradox, that we will call 'Lefort's paradox', lies in the fact that ideological rule must be 'abstracted from any question concerning its origins', thus remaining outside of ideological enunciation and, as a result, rendering that enunciation deficient. In other words, to fulfil its political function of reproducing power, the ideological discourse must claim to represent an 'objective truth' that exists outside of it; however, the external nature of this 'objective truth' renders the ideological discourse inherently

lacking in the means to describe it in total, which can ultimately undermine this discourse's legitimacy and the power that it supports. This inherent contradiction of any version of modern ideology, argues Lefort, can be concealed only by the figure of the 'master', who, by being presented as standing *outside* ideological discourse and possessing *external* knowledge of the objective truth, temporarily conceals the contradiction by allowing it 'to appear through himself'... In other words, modern ideological discourse, gains its legitimacy from an imaginary position that is external to it and will experience a crisis of legitimacy if that imaginary external position is questioned or destroyed (Yurchak 2006: 10-11).

The above quote describes the ideological construction in post-independence Tajikistan and Uzbekistan very well. The post-Soviet societies seem to have an ambivalent attitude toward ideology. On the one hand, the totalitarian past made them develop a strong distaste for 'ideologisation' (*ideologizatsiia*) of political and social life. On the other, ideology has come to be perceived as an invisible social force, a sort of a spectre that defines and leads a society as a political community, having a life of its own. This is evident in Central Asian elites' apprehension in the wake of the Soviet era at the absence of a 'national idea' as a vital component/ feature of any society. It seems that the Ideology of National Independence/Unity was called into existence by the belief on the part of the elites in the fundamental necessity for a body politic to acquire a 'soul', without which that organic entity would be incapable of functioning. An Ideology thus takes on some transcendental qualities of "quasi-material existence" outside of peoples' minds (McLellan 1995: 28).

The concern with what post-Soviet intellectuals and politicians have termed, "an ideological vacuum" (see for instance, Karimov 1998: 7) among the ruling elites of the post-Soviet Uzbekistan is understandable when one remembers that they were socialised in a society that could not conceive of a political order without a leading ideology. Time and again in his public speeches and interviews Karimov asserted the organic necessity of an ideology for survival of any nation, presenting it as an urgent and existential task for the society to achieve. The 'vacuum' in ideology can potentially be taken advantage of by some external ill-intentioned forces in order to subjugate Uzbek people. As Karimov put it: "The absence of one's own opinion, submission to the will or the idea of the other is way more dangerous than any kind of economic or political dependence" (1998: 5).

Rahmonov uses identical language when discussing the need for a national ideology. In December 1996, before signing the peace agreement with opposition he remarks that



some of our scholars and politicians call for articulation of a new ideology for the country – national-statehood ideology or some other. This anxiety is related to the vacuum that has formed, it is assumed, in the consciousness of the people as a result of the events that took place in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. ... for Tajikistanis there is a danger of the vacuum being filled with radicalism, whereby some people present their extremism as a religion, while others – as democracy and democratic opposition. Although, it must be said, both democracy and religion are incompatible with extremism (Rahmonov 1997: 3-4).

The need for an ideology is thus two-fold: there is an ‘objective’, quasi-scientific need for a “healthy” ideology in any ‘healthy’ society; and having own ideology is a pre-requisite for safeguarding one’s independence and identity through acquisition of ‘ideological immunity’:

To form the ideological immunity among our people, especially the young ones, is of utmost importance in the contemporary conditions of overcoming the ideological vacuum. This work needs to be done carefully with much consideration, like an experienced white-bearded gardener would tenderly and with care grow the young plants. [...] The need to take account of the ideological situation in the post-Soviet area, the conditions in the Central Asian region, importance of filling in the vacuum that appeared after we denied the old ideology, with the new ideology – the ideology of national independence, should be clear to all of us. This should be done in order to actively oppose the attempts of the alien and destructive ideas to penetrate [our society] (Karimov 2001).

While achieving ideological immunity through construction of a national ideology is seen as vital and is actively promoted by the state, it was also deemed necessary that Uzbekistan’s Constitution had an article that stipulated that “No ideology shall be granted the status of state ideology” (Constitution of the RUz, Part I, Chapter 2, Article 12).<sup>6</sup> The texts on the Ideology of National Independence feature such contradictory elements as a critique of the ‘old’ Soviet ideology as ‘based on force and pressure, lies and hypocrisy’, the warnings against promoting the Ideology of National Independence to the status of the state official ideology and the arguments in favour of legitimacy of the Ideology due to its reflectivity of the interests, values and aspirations of the Uzbek nation (Karimov 1998: 2000).

It is quite obvious, despite all the government disclaimers, that the Ideology enjoys the status of an official state-promoted project. In 2001 the president issued a directive that ordered creation and integration into the state education system at all levels of an academic discipline of “Ideology of National Independence: main concepts and

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<sup>6</sup> Article 8 of the Constitution of the Tajik Republic states that “No one ideology, including a religious ideology, can be established as a state ideology”. This wording reflects a particular concern of the government with the possibility of a competition on the part of the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) as an alternative to the ‘secular statehood’ ideology in the aftermath of the civil war.

principles”.<sup>7</sup> In less than two months, the National Society of Philosophers published a textbook for use in the republic’s educational institutions, based on president’s ideas on the subject (2001). This obvious contradiction in the nature of the government-led conscious effort of the elites to articulate a national ideology and the simultaneous proclamations that such attempts are by no means intended to elevate it to the level of the state ideology is compounded by their failure to admit that the real content of the Ideology is ethno-nationalism. Nationalism is problematic as a state ideology in the former USSR, since it bears a lot of negative luggage. There is also a sense of urgency to position the ‘old’ Soviet ideology and other rival ideologies (such as Islamism and Western liberalism) as alien and imposed from outside, in stark contrast to the ‘new’ one as the only truly authentic, democratic and benign ideology that reflects the goals and desires of the Uzbek people.

According to the official definition, “In its essence the ideology of national independence of Uzbekistan is a system of ideas that express the main goals; bind the past and the future, and serve to fulfil the dreams of our people”.<sup>8</sup> An insightful analysis of the Ideology of National Independence by Andrew March describes the discursive strategy behind this enunciation:

The main strategy is to define the entire *state* in relation to common *goals*, to define the goals and aspirations as virtually constitutive of the *nation* as such, and to equate the *regime* with the proper articulation and realization of those goals through the state apparatus. These circular definitions, linked theoretically by the concept of ‘ideology’, ensure that the acceptance of one claim implies the acceptance of all of them and, more importantly, that the opposition to one of the parts can be treated as opposition to all of them. The aim is to create an exclusive identification between the political community, the state, the goal and the regime, using the talent and natural legitimacy of the first three to secure the legitimacy of the latter (March 2003: 229).

The ideology is presented as neutral, above politics. It is denied that it has the official state status and serves to legitimate and strengthen the regime in power. It is presented as an organic progress, a self-evolving and self-correcting social phenomenon that arises out of the natural dynamics within the society, something of the same order as the idea of the ‘invisible hand’ that by some inexplicable law of nature brings about

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<sup>7</sup> Directive of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan from January 18, 2001 “On creation and introduction into the republic’s education system of a discipline of the ‘Ideology of national independence: main concepts and principles’.

<sup>8</sup>*Milliy Istiqlol G’oyasi: Asosiy Tushunchalar va Tamoyillar* (The Idea of National Independence: the main concepts and principles – in Uzbek). Available on State- and Society- Building Academy under President of Uzbekistan site at <http://zamin.freenet.uz/mig/boshi.htm>.

systemic balance. Thus, since the ideology is a set of unproblematic ideas that are presented as apolitical (or pre-political, according to Gramsci) there is an assumption of societal uniformity and homogeneity of identity within the polity. Any ideologies or ideas that question that the regime's exclusive claim to expertise of achieving the obvious goals of development and progress, or do not share the purportedly universal values are othered and included in the list of the serious "ideological threats" that Uzbekistan faces these days, which are:

- Islamic caliphate;
- Re-unification of the newly independent states into the former (Soviet) Union;
- Threats to our history, national values and the essence of our religion;
- Attempts at moral corruption of the people;
- Incitement of regional and international conflicts (*Milliy Istiqlol G'oyasi*).

The first two threats on the list both, although in quite different ways, question the legitimacy of the very existence of the post-1991 Uzbekistan. An Islamic Caliphate does not base its legitimacy on national identity. Similarly, to question that Uzbekistan's emergence as an independent state resulted from the conscious struggle of the Uzbek people for a sovereign statehood or rather was a mere historical accident is dangerous to legitimacy of new Uzbekistan. The Ideology has to 'bind the past and future' through a narrative of an 'Uzbek people' that always struggled for independence (Alimova and Rtveladze 2001). The following two sources of danger on the list create the moral spaces of identity of the 'inside' that is marked by the superior understanding of one's history, religion and value and the 'outside' that strives to corrupt this pure world.

Similar efforts at articulation of a 'national idea' have been taking place in Tajikistan since the conclusion of the civil war with a peace accord in 1997. This idea does not simply include the normative 'national statehood' (*davlatdori milli*) but also gives special attention to 'national unity' (*vahdati milli*) (Heathershaw 2009: 70). Rahmonov assigns the responsibility for the event of late 1990s in Tajikistan to the "external and internal forces" which had led to "the destruction of statehood, our innumerable miseries" (1997: 6). He then links the ideology of the "demo-Islamist opposition" with the geopolitical plans to remove Tajikistan from the zone of CIS into the world of "Islamism", from where "there is no exist" (7). In sum, the side that triumphed in the civil war blames the opposition for the "destruction of statehood" and "national unity"

that Rahmon's rule has restored. In post-conflict Tajik society any issues considered to be 'too political' are carefully avoided and the discourses of 'peacekeeping' (international community), *mirotvorchestvo* (ruling elite) and *tinji* (popular discourse) create an ideology of authoritative rule that appears to be 'above and beyond' politics while the alternative to it is the return to the war (Heathershaw 2007: 223-231). More recently, the construction of Roghun dam and the power station, has been declared as the new unifying national idea.

'The people' are thus inscribed as a nation that has a right to territorial statehood. That statehood itself is normative, and characterised by a high degree of centralisation of power. The ideology of the new states is enunciated by conflation of concepts. Thus the common goals and values of an organic and timeless people through centuries culminate in the consolidation of a strong centralised state ruled by a charismatic founding-father figure, a sovereign, who impersonates the state power. In both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan sovereign power is "hyper-personified" by the presidents, who 'depoliticise' the politics by maintaining a permanent state of emergency, a state of exception, whereby the possibility of sovereign statehood itself is securitised.

## Conclusion

In the beginning of the twenty first century we see the return of the debates of what constitutes Tajik and Uzbek identities that a century ago became the basis for creation of these two republics as separate politico-administrative entities within the Soviet Union. Within a decade, the primary political identification of Central Asian population moved away from local, tribal, social and 'mode of life' identities to those based on notions of ethnicity and nationhood. The Soviet Union not only introduced the notions of ethnicity as a political category, but also institutionalized it as the primary mode of identification of its subjects. The 'fifth line' (*přatařa grafa*) of Soviet passports has also been adopted by post-Soviet Central Asian bureaucracies as a means of categorizing and governing their populations. The federative structure of the Soviet Union is arguably what allowed for its relatively peaceful disintegration and the ease of recognition for the constituent parts that had the status of the Union republics.

In the first decades after the unexpected independence, Central Asian intellectuals and politicians alike looked to the past to find the sources for legitimacy and some authentic definitions of who 'the people' in whom the sovereignty of the state arises are. The nationalizing states of Central Asia thus looked to the past not only to understand what kind of people populated the region and what specifically made them 'Kazakh', 'Kyrgyz', 'Tajik', 'Uzbek' or 'Turkmen' and why is there no state called 'Sartostan' between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; these new states looked to the past also to find the previous examples of indigenous "statehood" that existed prior to Russian and Soviet colonial encounters. For Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the Samanid and the Temurid dynastic states appeared as the paragons of glory of 'proto-Tajik' and 'proto-Uzbek' states respectively. The above analysis of the emergence of the Tajik and Uzbek identity demonstrate the inherently dialogic and at the same time Möbian (undeterminable) nature of Central Asian identities that can only exist within the chain of difference between signifiers. Thus Tajik is only 'knowable' and comes into existence in presence of 'Uzbek' and vice versa. The case of disappearing Sarts, and the debates about who they 'really' were demonstrates most clearly the process of articulation of Tajik and Uzbek identities as inseparable dialectically entangled binary pair constituting the single side of a Möbius ring. Next chapter looks at the clashing historiographies of this period as debated between scholars and politicians of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in the post-independence period.

## Chapter Four

# Clashing historiographies of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan

*"Life is not what one lived, but what one remembers and how one remembers it in order to recount it"*

(Gabriel García Márquez)

In the previous chapter I discussed the history of emergence of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in their current borders. This chapter deals with the history of historiography in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as a means to observe the construction of identity through the major debates and the shifting preoccupations of both historians and politicians in these countries. Moreover, we will discover in this chapter how positive self-image and negative other-image are constructed in the “discursive encounters” of the competing historiographical debates between Tajik and Uzbek historians as well as politicians. One of the main themes in this chapter is the intertwining of politics and historiography in the ‘writing’ of the post-Soviet state in Central Asia. History writing here is approached not just as any academic field of enquiry but as a state-lead institutional academic enterprise, which aims to forge unity of a nation, to create an ‘imagined community’, to instil in one pride for their ‘Homeland’ and the ‘great ancestors’.

The chapter begins with a discussion of continuity and change in Tajik and Uzbek historiographies throughout the Soviet and post-independence periods, which points out the politicisation and ideologisation of the discipline and practice of history writing in these two states. It then proceeds directly to analyse the clash of Tajik and Uzbek historiographies and the construction and reconstruction of the identity and territorial boundaries within the discourse of history writing. We will see how positive self-identity and negative other-identity is constructed on each side and how those identities are linked or delinked from certain territories in the ‘historiography wars’ between two competing narratives of the region’s history. My main argument here is

that each state's history writing paradigm is in correspondence with the general model of their post-independence statehood – 'external-territory-claiming' in case of Tajikistan and 'sovereignty-protecting' in case of Uzbekistan. In other words, Tajik historiography just like Tajik nationalism has to look beyond the borders of the Tajik state in its current borders to establish both the authentic Tajik identity and the claims (even if only sentimental and symbolic) with the lost 'promised land' of the ancestral Homeland. This comes into the direct conflict with Uzbek historiography and nationalism that is defensive of the boundaries of the Uzbek identity and state in its current borders. In short, Tajik historiography based on ethnic claims threatens the internal cohesiveness of the historical narrative advanced by the Uzbek historians, who follow the territorial principle in their approach to history writing. Both sides engage in a dialogic process of reinterpretation of the Soviet repertoires, narratives and heroes, whereby each one attempts to legitimise and naturalise the post-Soviet statehood by rooting them in historical claims.

### **Clashing Historiographies of Statehood**

After the declarations of independence were made, history writing was summoned to make sense of their unexpected rise to sovereign statehood. Given that the period preceding the disintegration of the USSR was not marked by anti-colonial struggle, it has become the task of history writing to depict the heroic struggles for independence in the past. The Uzbek and Tajik official pantheon of national heroes is thus filled with figures of 'great forefathers', who fought against foreign domination. Completing the long line of champions of Tajik and Uzbek statehood are the current presidents of the countries – Emomali Rahmonov and Islam Karimov.

The leaders of the newly independent Central Asian states universally took it upon themselves to set the research agendas of their respective Institutes of History within the Academy of Sciences -- a structure that each union republic possessed and inherited with little or no reform. The respective presidents have 'authored' books on history ghost-written by the prominent historians that serve as presidential advisors. This has also been in accordance with the Soviet tradition of close cooperation between the

ruling elites and historians. There has not been any research into how historians themselves view their role in constructing the sense of shared past among the members of the nation. Smith et al suggest that there is a tradition among Central Asian intellectuals “to counter by evasion rather than confrontation the noxious regulation and ideology imposed by overbearing politicians” (Smith et al 1998: 68).

The line between practice of politics and history writing is thus rather blurred. There are many examples of historians becoming politicians and politicians assuming the role of historians. Sadriddin Aini, a prominent Jadid from Bukhara and later a champion of Tajik national statehood, can be considered to be the founder of this tradition (Mamadazimov 1996: 9). In 1923 he published a history of Manghit dynasty, condemning the former rulers as unenlightened despots, which was followed by *Materials for the History of the Bukharan Revolution* in 1926 (Bergne 2007: 77-9). Around the same time, Fayzullah Khodjaev, also a Young Bukharan and the founder of the Soviet Uzbek state authored a volume pursuing the same goal of delegitimizing the rule of the Manghits, written within the Marxist framework and preoccupied with the fate and suffering of the simple toilers. These works, according to Adeeb Khalid, were the “first examples of a truly modern Central Asian historiography” (Khalid 1999: 447). I would also add that these works, based on personal experiences of the authors of the recent events, were trend-setting not only in their Marxist approach but in the conflation of the roles of politician and historian.

Babajan Gafurov is another example of a historian becoming a first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Tajikistan and then retiring back into academia at the end of his service. His books became cornerstones of Tajik nationalism and laid the foundation for the contemporary approach to history writing in Tajikistan (Mamadazimov 1996: 9). Similarly, Rahim Masov, who has become the most vocal and authoritative voice in Tajik historiography since the 1990s, and is known as the main ideologue of Rahmon(ov)’s regime.

In Uzbekistan historians also serve as advisors to president and are actively involved in the production of ‘presidential’ publications as well as scholarly articles and monographs appearing under their own names. I know from personal experience of living and studying in three Central Asian states that almost every single high school



and undergraduate research paper, masters dissertation, doctoral theses, academic articles and books are often exercises in summarization of the official history, necessarily followed by the list of references a large part of which would consist of the books by leader of the day. All history textbooks in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are approved by the respective Ministries of Education and become a part of the sole set of texts used in the classrooms across the country (Keller 2007, Blakkisrud & Nozimova 2010). There has been thus a continuity in the merging of the power structures with academic production in both Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

The Marxist-Leninist doctrine of the development of human society in relation to development of the productive forces constituted the theoretical and methodological cornerstone of the Soviet historiography. According to this doctrine, some “backward” societies could skip certain stages of development (namely capitalism) and transfer directly into the socialist formation (*Soviet Encyclopedia* 1974: 111). History writing during this period was periodized according to Marxist concept of formations – primitive-communal, slave-ownership, feudal and capitalist – with special attention being given to the relations of production, history of class struggle and the role of the working masses in history, as opposed to the writing of history of kings and their conquests, practiced before (*Encyclopedia* 1974: 77).

Central Asian rulers before the Great October Revolution were mostly depicted in negative tones and history was written as a narrative of extreme oppression and rebellions against the despotic rule. The development of Tajik and Uzbek cultures within the ‘national in form, socialist in content’ framework was to occur with the brotherly help of the more advanced nation of the Soviet Union, the Great Russian people (Radzhabov 1968:7). Marxist theorization of the ‘Oriental mode of production’ dependent on artificial irrigation and the state maintenance of the irrigation canals and the resulting inevitable ‘Oriental despotism’ (Wittfogel 1957), was very much in congruence with the previous Orientalist scholarship on the history of the region produced by the Tsarist scholars and administrators (Gafurov 1989).

The creation of research institutions at the Union level and replication of those structures at the level of the republics during the Soviet times<sup>1</sup> contributed to professionalization of history practice. Despite this, history was still too important to be left to historians. As a result most of the research tended to be based on secondary sources and lacking in original arguments, approaches or methodology. Especially in the 1960s and 1970s, mainstream historiographical practices were extremely conservative and cautious to the extent of becoming plagiaristic rather than engaging in original research. The approach taken was in line with the Marxist views of formational evolution, with primary focus however being given to the matters of nationality and ethnicity. The Central Asian scholars throughout the years could engage in serious debates on historiography with each other without ever challenging the underlying assumptions regarding ethnicity and nationalities. The nationalities and ethnicities were considered objective realities whose existence was projected back into the mists of times, rather than being seen as having its origins in Soviet modernity (Keller 2007: 266).

The Soviet nationalities policies attempted to promote Central Asian ethnic cultures as separate and distinct, thus emphasizing the differences in language, costume and folklore (Slezkine 1994). Therefore the early indigenous attempt at regional historiography by Bolat (Polat) Saliyef (Saliev) that treated the region as an indivisible whole in which ethnicity was of minor importance was denounced by Soviet school of historiography. His book, *History of Central Asia*, and its continuation published in 1929 already as *History of Uzbekistan*, was rejected as a model for regional historiography. It was labelled 'nationalist and pan-Turkic' (Usmonov 2006: 9).<sup>2</sup>

In 1998 Uzbek president gave a speech entitled "There is no future without historical memory", in which he told the historians that the issue of statehood (*davlatchilik*) was of utmost political importance. It was essential that the Academy of Sciences' Institute of History establishes the ancient roots of Uzbek statehood, he declared. Following that

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<sup>1</sup> Uzbekistan's Academy of Sciences was created in 1943. Gafurov was instrumental in upgrading of the Tajik branch of the Academy of Sciences to the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan and the creation of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography within it in 1951 (TSE 1974, 236).

<sup>2</sup> Saliyef's approach was in line with what Adeeb Khalid (1999) calls "Chaghatayism" (from a circle of Jadids "Chaghatay gurungi" that sought to foster a common identity for the Turkic peoples of Central Asia). Although Chaghatayism was rejected by the official historiography, its traces are still found in Uzbekistan's history writing, as Uzbek identity is equated with Chaghatay heritage.

meeting with the scholars, the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan issued a Decree *On improvement of the activity of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan*, restructuring the departments and outlining the measures to be taken in pursuit of the new research agenda. Thus, the historic science was tasked with providing a credible narrative of the long and inevitable teleological progress towards independent statehood.

The Uzbek academia followed the conception for the new historiography outlined by Karimov, publishing and drafting a series of publications dedicated to the matter of statehood. For instance, in 2000 the Institutes of History and Archaeology of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences started a project of a fundamental multi-volume edition on *The History of Statehood of Uzbekistan*, which spans an enormous period of three millennia from the late Bronze Age up to the present day (Alimova & Rtveladze, 2001: 5). Establishing the 'origins' of the present-day statehood in the distant past has become the defining research problem of Uzbek historiography. The Institute of History views "development of a conception of history of Uzbek people and their statehood" as its primary task (AN RUz 2006). History writing is also essential for the articulation of the so-called 'Ideology of National Independence' (*Milliy Istiqlol Mafkurası*) in Uzbekistan, since, as Alimova and Rtveladze point out, the investigation of the history of statehood "is not only of scientific significance, it is an integral part of the national idea, since it establishes the fact of independent emergence, formation and development of the national statehood throughout several millennia" (3).

'Statehood' within this discourse is a normative category founded in a historical materialist vision of history of humankind. Translating Karimov's instructions into the historical categories, the leading scholars of the Institute of History insisted that "the autochthonism of the emergence and the spontaneity of its development, the traditional nature of its existence, despite the periods of the domination of the alien statehood, have in the end of the day become the defining factors in the revival of Uzbek statehood in its new form in the beginning of the 1990s" (2001: 3). For the purposes of school teaching curriculum, the Uzbek historical science was to construct a simple narrative, which would be a continuation of the Soviet tradition of teaching the schoolchildren that "Uzbeks had lived in Central Asia for millennia, and for millennia had valiantly fought foreign invaders" (Keller, 2007: 257).

In contrast to the Uzbek focus on the history of statehood the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Tajik Academy of Sciences has concentrated its efforts on the production of the six-volume *History of Tajik People* [Istoriia tadzhikskogo naroda/ Ta'rikhi khalqi tojik]. The main concern of the study remains the ethnogenesis of the Tajik people, the emergence of their early statehood and the final formation of the people and the Golden Age of their statehood during the Samanid period. The web site of the Institute underlines that the research into that period "besides its huge scientific value is also called upon in order to provide the ideological and cultural support in the strengthening and development of the independence of the Republic of Tajikistan".<sup>3</sup>

The following sections of this chapter deal with instances of 'discursive encounters' in history writing between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and their significance to the construction of statehood in both republics. These clashes have their antecedents in Soviet historiographical traditions. While the form of history writing in the post-independence period has not undergone significant changes, the content and focus has shifted to focus on selected periods perceived as the formative and final periods in the process of the nation's 'ethno-genesis', which usually coincides with the 'Golden Age' of glory of the past national statehood, as well as lives and achievements of the great ancestors' associated with those periods. All of the above-mentioned elements of historiographical narrative have been strongly debated in discursive encounters between scholars and politicians of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

### **Early discursive encounters**

The disagreements started well before Tajikistan and Uzbekistan acquired independence – during the early years of the Soviet state. In June 1936 there was a scientific forum in the Tajik capital city of Stalinabad (later Dushanbe) regarding the appropriate approach to writing of Tajik history. Historians and Orientalists from Moscow and Tashkent also took part in the debates. The Uzbek delegation argued

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<sup>3</sup> Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography named after Ahmadi Donish, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan. The official web page is found at [http://www.ant.tj/m17\\_1\\_1\\_3\\_1\\_full.htm](http://www.ant.tj/m17_1_1_3_1_full.htm) . Accessed on 11 December 2008.

against the ethnic principle for Tajik historiography, arguing that that would give Tajik nationalists a hope for return of the territories not included in the existing state (Ashurov, 2003: 74). The historians from Uzbekistan, headed by V. Ia. Iarotskii, insisted that Tajik history should be studied within the contemporary geographical boundaries of the republic, i.e. "from Regar to Vahan" (Ashurov, 2003: 75). This discussion was continued at the region-wide Central Asian Congress of Historians and Scholars that congregated in Samarkand in 1936 (Usmonov, 2006: 9).

The Congress discussed whether the ethnic or the territorial principle should be adopted to organise the historical studies of the region. As it proved virtually impossible to separate regional history neatly into separate slots and label them as 'Uzbek', 'Tajik' or 'Turkmen' (Smith et al, 1998: 70), for each Central Asian titular group to get parcels of their own history with accompanying symbols, a combination of the two principles had to be applied. As all of the Turkic peoples of the region were considered to be the descendants of the Turkic-Mongol tribes that settled in the region in waves throughout centuries and some of them still lead a nomadic lifestyle, the territorial principle of historiography allowed for consideration of all the state formations that ever existed on the territory of the new republics as part of their respective national histories (Keller, 2007: 267).

During the 1938-39 Stalinist purges there was less tolerance for visions of Central Asia as a single whole. As a result, the process of nomination of "an extremely limited set of safe heroes" for each republic was started by the historians (Smith et al, 1998: 71). These heroes had to meet certain criteria to qualify. The chosen ones tended to be apolitical, peaceful, a-religious settled persons, who could not be belligerent to Russia. They were also required to have made a contribution to the 'treasure throne of global civilization', not only to Central Asian or Muslim culture. As a result, most of Central Asian heroes came from the periods of the rule of the Samanid and Temurid medieval dynasties, which had Bukhara and Samarkand as their centres, now found in the territory of Uzbekistan (Keller, 2007: 268; Hidoyatov, 1990). However, since the cultural and historical heritage of the Samanid and Temurid states was considered by Tajiks as their own, contradictions emerged regarding the assignment of the heroes to either to Uzbek or Tajik history (Khudonazar 2004). This emphasis on certain periods and persona has led to debates regarding the 'real' ethnicity of a certain historic

personalities and attribution of 'ownership' of cultural and scientific achievements of past state formations to an ethnic group. This happened because Tajik and Uzbek schools of historiography chose opposing principles to guide their studies: Tajikistan adopted the ethnic principle while Uzbekistan has used territorial principle for its history writing.<sup>4</sup>

There are four intimately intertwined intellectual issues at stake in the discursive encounters between Tajik and Uzbek historiographies: first, the issue of *ethnogenesis*, the study of the process of emergence of a particular ethnic group; second, and logically following the first one, the issue of the proper attribution of the Central Asian civilization to either Uzbek or Tajik people, based on their status as the most ancient *autochthon* people of the region; third, the discussions of ethnogenesis and ethnic autochthonism lead to *racialization* of the differences between Tajiks and Uzbeks, which naturalised and essentialised the constructed groups; fourth and finally, the proper *boundaries of ethnic homelands* of these groups are drawn on the basis of the discursive constructions of identity based on the principles of ethnogenesis, autochthonism and racialized difference between these two ethnic groups.

All of the above intellectual issues have roots in the Soviet ethnographic and historiographical traditions and are necessary building blocks in the post-Soviet discourse of 'statehood'. It is thus instrumental for each group to 'prove' through the findings of archaeology and (physical) ethnography that: (1) the process of ethnogenesis of their particular ethnic group was completed before the other group's; (2) this process of ethnogenesis was autochthon to the territory of the claimed rightful ethnic homeland; and (3) the objective racial phenotypical differences (corresponding to the linguistic characteristics of the group) preclude the confusion regarding the proper attribution of those 'proto-ethnic' groups to the contemporarily existing ethnic groups.

Within this paradigm the most beneficial strategy for the Tajiks was to pursue the ethnic principle in historiography as the Iranian cultural heritage of the region could be

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<sup>4</sup> Blakkisrud and Nozimova note that while school history textbooks during the Soviet period narrated the history of the *territory* of the Tajik SSR, post-independence history-writing is entirely focused on the history of the Tajik people or *nation* (2010: 177).

claimed as 'proto'-Tajik. Moreover, the sedentary lifestyle of Tajiks allowed them to claim the title of *the* indigenous people of the region, thus by implication portraying all the Turkic peoples in the region as recent arrivals (Masov, 1991: 4; Mamadazimov, 1996: 12; Usmonov, 2006: 24). This was also in line with the general bias in Soviet historiography toward settled people with written culture over peoples with nomadic lifestyle who did not possess written history.

Significant works in Tajik nationalist historiography initially appeared in 1970-1980s and sought to establish the unique identity of respective ethnic groups based on a distinguished and ancient pre-history, thus legitimating claims for certain heritage and homeland. Bobojon Gafurov's monumental work entitled *The Tajiks: Archaic, Ancient and Medieval History* (1970) immediately became a bestseller and a 'bible' for every Tajik intellectual. The work was immediately acclaimed for the excellence of research and introduction of exhaustive archaeological and numismatic evidence, which qualitatively differed from the scholarship produced before that on the subject.

This work was, however, greeted with much discontent in Uzbekistan. The Tajik statesman-turned-historian wrote a history of an ethnic group, not of the territory of the republic created in 1929. The review of the first edition by the academicians Okladnikov and Piotrovskii, however, pointed out that the title of the work – *The Tajiks* – “was not very appropriate as most of the Central Asian history discussed in the book is attributed to the period, when Tajiks had not been formed as people yet” (Ashurov, 2003: 73). The leadership and academic community of the neighboring Uzbekistan wrote letters to the Central Committee of the Communist Party and all of the central periodicals, condemning Gafurov. Uzbek colleagues were especially annoyed by the fact that Abu Ali Ibn Sino (Avicenna), Al-Khwarizmi, Al-Ferghani and Beruni were mentioned in the context of Tajik history (Ashurov, 2003: 77). Moreover, what was most objectionable, the 1972 edition of *The Tajiks* included a discussion of the ethnogenesis of the Uzbek people that states that they only formed as a group quite tardily in the late Middle Ages with the arrival of the tribal confederation that gave the ethnic group its name.

In direct contradiction to the Tajik historians' position, in 1970s and 1980s Uzbek historians went as far as to deny any Iranian presence in the region during the Samanid

period and argued that the entire region, including Bukhara and Samarkand, was populated by Turkic tribes, with Arabic being the language of administration and various Turkic dialects being the tongue of everyday use (Askarov, 1986: 7-10; Shaniyazov, 1974: 9).

Late 1980s and early 1990s were characterized by the rise of nationalist historiographies. The increased ethno-national consciousness, combined with the wave of democratization impulse among the intelligentsia during *perestroika* has led creation of multiple discussion clubs and political organizations. The names of these organizations usually appealed to the historical symbolism of the glorious past. Thus, for instance, the women's wing of Birlik movement in Uzbekistan was called "Tumaris", after the legendary queen of the Massaget people. Similarly, civic movements in Tajikistan included those with such general names as 'Rastokhez' [Rebirth], 'The People of Samani' as well as more regionally-aligned Eh'yoyi Hujand [Rebirth of Khujand] (Guboglo & Chicherina, 1990). All of these movements saw the study of history of the Central Asian people as part of liberalization and sovereignisation processes in the Union republics.

Moreover, the burgeoning civil society of late *perestroika* in Tajikistan had a significant transnational element to it. Among the socio-cultural centers registered in the republic in 1990 one sees such associations as "Samarkand", and the national-cultural centre of Persians and Tajiks of Bukhara called "Oftobi Sugdiyon" [The Sun of Sogdiana] (Chicherina, 1990). Both of the above movements sought to improve the situation with cultural and linguistic rights of the Tajik minority in Uzbekistan by demanding that the accurate statistical information regarding their numbers be established and advocating for the possibility of re-recording one-self as a Tajik in practice, not only on paper. Some of the emboldened representatives of the nationalistically-minded democratizing forces even went as far as to claim Samarkand and Bukhara as rightfully Tajik cities that should be therefore "returned" into Tajikistan's fold.

It was at this point (1991), on the eve of the Soviet Union's disintegration, that Rahim Masov published his notorious book entitled *Istoriia topornogo razdeleniia* [History of Crude Division]. This book, the first in the trilogy of the revisionist historiography of the national delimitation of the 1920s, was subsequently banned in Uzbekistan (Masov



1991, 1995, 2003). Masov's writing since the publication of the *History of Crude Division* has become the voice of resentment towards Uzbekistan within the official discourse. The main theses of Masov's works can be summarized as follows. The Great October Revolution of the Bolshevik party that took place in 1917 was the greatest event in the history of Tajik people. While the project of the national territorial delimitation was justified and necessary, what the Bolsheviks envisaged did not translate into reality. Many fatal mistakes were made in large part due to careerism and lack of national self-consciousness of Tajiks themselves, who were "poisoned" by the venom of Pan-Turkism. The Pan-Turkists (or "Great Uzbek chauvinists") initiated "in essence, genocide of Tajik people" (Masov, 1991: 11). Uzbeks (Turks) pushed Tajiks into the mountainous parts of the region, assimilated them [Tajiks], took their lands away, appropriated their culture and achievements. In the 1920s Uzbeks tried to prevent the emergence of Tajik statehood by all means. Tajiks within Uzbekistan were subjected to a process of assimilation, which was "very dangerous" and amounted to "overt [*neprikrityi*] genocide" (77). Even though there were no mass killings, i.e. no genocide in the conventional sense of the word, it was still a genocide "not physical, but documentary", as a result of which "Tajiks as people no longer existed in Uzbekistan" (78).

Despite its contribution to scholarship in revealing the complex dynamics that were at work during the early period of Sovietisation of Central Asia, I personally find Masov's writing quite objectionable as it is premised on ideas of racial superiority of the Tajiks and projects the animosity between Tajiks and Uzbeks back into the mists of time. He quotes several Russian anthropologists and historians, who wrote that Tajiks are of "pure Aryan stock", and himself makes a note of the racial difference between the Tajiks and the rest of the population in the region, saying that Tajiks "have more in common with the Slavic and the Indo-European peoples rather than with Turks" (1991: 23). Quite understandably, the Uzbek establishment have reacted to Masov's writing extremely negatively, referring to his arguments as 'crazy dreams of Hitler' and 'chauvinistic hypotheses and ideas' (Gafurov, 2003:-42). Since independence Masov's ideas came into even more prominence in Tajikistan as he was appointed as the head of the Institute of History. His ideas regarding the origins of Tajiks reached their grotesque conclusion in the celebration of the Year of the Aryan Civilisation in Tajikistan in 2006.

## The Aryanism Debates

Tajik historiography in the years following the civil war, has concentrated on the pre-Islamic aspects of Tajik identity, namely the Aryan origins of the people and the Zoroastrian heritage. The focus of the Tajik state on Aryanism of Tajiks serves several rhetorical purposes. First, it pushes the starting point of ethnogenesis extremely far into antiquity, giving Tajiks an edge over the rest of the region's peoples. Second, it firmly grounds the claims for ethnic autochthonism of Tajiks as descendants of the Aryans that inhabited the perceived homeland of Tajiks long before any of the Turkic people arrived in the region. Third, the Aryans having the perceived link to the European peoples (as is Farsi/Tojiki said to be related to other Indo-European languages) makes Tajiks racially distinct and superior to their Turkic neighbors. Last but not least, Aryan discourse serves the internal political purposes as a secular marker of identity that counters the Islamic opposition's vision of Tajik identity as primarily Muslim.<sup>5</sup>

The celebration of 2006 as the Year of the Aryan Civilization in Tajikistan was met with much indignation and satire in Uzbekistan. Since the Tajik government already announced the plan to celebrate the Aryan civilization in 2001, historians from both sides engaged in heated debates. In 2003 a scholar from Uzbekistan, Gershenzon denounced the interest in Aryanism in Tajikistan as a revival of misguided 'mythology' of the racial superiority, which has been discredited not only by the tragic events of the Second World War but also by the findings of the linguistics, archaeology and even genetics (Gershenzon, 2003).

The final round of controversy was set in motion by the publication in 2005 of an article by Ahmadali Askarov (Asqarov) entitled *The Aryan issue: New Approaches and New Thoughts* (Asqarov, 2005). The work is notable in its extreme ideologisation of archaeology. In a surprising move, Askarov turns the Aryanism discourse of Tajik colleagues on its head and claims the Aryan heritage for Uzbekistan. By inverting the arguments of the opposing side, which he brands 'pan-Iranist' in direct contrast to

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted here that initially (1990-1992) the theme of Zoroastrianism and Aryanism was a part of the opposition's historical discourse. It was then appropriated by the government in the aftermath of the civil war (Source: interview with Asadullaev, Dushanbe, summer 2008).

Masov's 'pan-Turkist' label, Askarov reinterprets the archaeological and linguistic sources as signifiers of the Turkic essence of Aryans. He argues that Aryans were Turkic-speakers, equates shamanism with Zoroastrianism, interprets Andronov culture as Turkic and insists that the Achaemenid dynasty was a Turkic dynasty that, only later, was Iranised under the linguistic influence of the local population. The publication of the article on the Internet was followed by a 'historiographic war' on the *CentrAsia.ru* website throughout 2006. Masov was the first to respond, followed by other notable scholars from both sides. The text of the posts by Masov during the exchange was subsequently published by *Merosi niyogon* journal, of which Rahim Masov is the chief editor, the entire issue of which was dedicated to the 'Aryan question'.

The Aryan discourse is by no means new or freshly invented by the post-independence regime and its court intellectuals, but has its roots in the Soviet, and even before that, in the tsarist Orientalist scholarship that was guilty of what Vassili Barthold called 'tajikophily' and 'ariophily' (Laruelle, 2007: 55). This tendency resurfaced after the Second World War when the Soviet scholars became increasingly preoccupied with the issues of 'ethnogenesis' (Slezkine, 1996: 858). The Marxist visions of nations as the outcome of evolution in the means of production were replaced by the explicitly nationalist search for ethno-racial origins and timeless essences in order to establish the autochthonism of the Soviet nationalities.

For Tajiks the search for ethnogenesis took them from the Samanids to the Aryans. Shortly after being appointed the First Secretary of the Tajik Communist Party Bobojon Gafurov wrote his first work on history of the Tajik people *Istoriia tadzhikov* (1947), in which he discussed the importance of Indo-European issue for Tajik identity in order to prove the ancient presence of 'Tajiks' ancestors in Central Asia. The creation of the Samanid state, according to Gafurov, was the end point of the process of ethnogenesis of the Tajiks, beginning from which one starts to speak of Tajiks rather than 'ancestors of Tajik people'. This approach was productive in two ways. First of all, it differentiated Tajiks from Persians, arguing that although the Tajiks are of Persian stock, they have had an independent path in history and that it would be unfair to attribute all Persian heritage to contemporary Iran alone. Secondly, this approach went beyond the borders of Soviet Tajikistan expanding into the entire region. This went against the

‘geographical’ (territorial) principle of history writing propagated by Uzbekistan’s historians.

### **The importance of statehood: the Samanids versus the Temurids**

Thus, in the Tajik historiographical discourse the first instance of ‘statehood’ [*gosudarstvennost’/ davlatdori*] among the Iranian-speaking tribes in the region was pushed back to the times of Avesta and Zoroastranism (first millennium BOE). For instance, in an article by a Tajik scholar, Avesta is treated as a historical source from which one is to gain knowledge regarding the roots of Tajik identity and ‘the process of the ethnogenesis of Tajiks’ (Mumindzhanov, 2003: 89-97). In order to demonstrate the continuity in the regional tradition of statehood, the Samanid dynasty’s rule is described as guided by the ‘principles of Avesta’ and in-line with the civilizing mission of the Tajiks in the region. Besides, the Arab and Mongol invasions are thought of as destructive for the true identity of the local population and their influences (especially that of Islam) are silenced in the historiographic discourse.

In August of 1996, a pamphlet entitled *The Tajiks in the Mirror of History* by President Emomali Rahmonov was published.<sup>6</sup> The main theses of the article were that Tajiks are the original autochthon people of Central Asia who are Aryan in their origins (46). According to Rahmonov, the Tajiks achieved the heights of sovereign statehood before the Mongolian invasion. In more recent history, Rahmonov writes: “Our enemies did not want the construction of Tajik statehood and rejected the existence of Tajik people and Tajik language altogether” (Rahmonov, 1997: 47). This is an explicit reference to Masov’s thesis of the ‘crude division’ and victimization of the Tajik people.

In 2006 an Uzbek historian Academician Rtveladze wrote a review to Rahmonov’s *The Tajiks in the Mirror of History* calling it a work of a dilatant based on a fascist-style view of the region’s history (Rtveladze, 2006: 75-80). His critique of the book Rtveladze

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<sup>6</sup> During my interview with a prominent academic in the of summer 2008, he claimed the authorship of at least one of Rahmon(ov) pamphlets on history – “Tajiks yesterday and today” from 1996.

makes an insightful (and rather courageous) observation regarding the newly emerging trend in the historiography of Central Asian states. He writes:

... we are seeing a new conception of Central Asian history in the making, which I have dubbed the “conception of ethnic exceptionalism”. The main features of this conception, regardless whether the scholar advancing it is of Iranian or Turkic background, are: 1. Assertion of one’s own people as having the most ancient history of statehood in Central Asia. 2. One’s own people are necessarily the most ancient indigenous people of the region, as well is the name of the people itself. 3. Exaggerated scope of the past states’ boundaries and the territories of that people’s habitat. 4. Unjustified glorification of one’s own people and playing down of the significance of other people, one’s own people have a civilizing mission in relation to other ‘barbarian’ people. To these principles I would add the fifth – the search for the enemy of one’s people (Rtveladze, 2006: 75-76).

All of these features are indeed found in both the Tajik and Uzbek post-independence historical narratives. While the Samanid state has been singled out as the ‘Golden Age’ of the national statehood in Tajikistan, the Temurid dynasty’s rule over the region is treated similarly in Uzbekistan.

In 1999 the 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Samanid State was celebrated in Tajikistan. The memorial complex comprising an imposing 11-meter statue of Ismoil Somoni (the founder of the Samanid state), a gilded arch representing “a signpost, symbol, image of the nation” and two lions to the sides of the ruler, guarding him was opened on the eighth anniversary of Tajikistan’s independence, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1999 (Nourzhanov, 2006). Present-day Tajik statehood is understood as the direct continuation of the Samanids’ state, which was destroyed by the invading Turkic (read ‘Uzbek’) tribes in the 10<sup>th</sup> century:

The Samanid state has for us, Tajiks, a special historical meaning. It is during this period that the factors and conditions necessary for the completion of the Tajik people’s formation process were accomplished.

It is during this period that literary Tajik language, which has the foundational significance for the unification of Tajiks into a single people, was formed.

We did not have our own statehood in a thousand years since then, but within this period many great empires and states of Central Asia have chosen this language, the Tajik language, as the state language of theirs.

Furthermore, this was the period of formation of the new Tajik culture, which determined the self-consciousness, uniqueness and historic fate of Tajik people. It is only thanks to their culture that Tajiks, who found themselves within other ethnic states would preserve their unique identity (*samobitnost’*), and could found their own independent state – the Republic of Tajikistan– in the twentieth century. (Rahmonov in UNESCO, 1999: 13-14).

The Samanid state is the high point within narrative of uninterrupted ascent of the Tajik people from their supposed Aryan roots to the culmination found in the acquisition of independence. Academician Numon Negmatov, the author of a monograph on the

Samanid State (1977 in Russian, 1989 in Tajik), coined the term 'historical Tajikistan'<sup>7</sup> to refer to extensive territories of Central Asia where, at the times of the Samanid state, the "ethno-genesis of the Tajiks took place" (Negmatov, 1992: 6). According to him the concept was developed "since this territory that in the past was the area of ethnic formation of Tajik people and its first political statehood does not coincide with contemporary geopolitical realities (*ob'ektivnostiu*) of Central Asia, in order to express the concrete truths and concrete realities of the evolutionary processes of history" (Negmatov, 1997: 22). The essence of the Tajik nation, according to Negmatov is in what he calls 'the Tajik phenomenon'. The Tajik phenomenon is that ability of the Tajik nation, and namely its timeless essence expressed in its language and culture, to survive the absence of political sovereign statehood, despite the conquests of barbarian nomads (i.e. Uzbeks), while also performing a civilizing mission in the region, whereby the uncultured conquerors would adopt the language and culture of the conquered peace-loving Tajiks (Negmatov, 1997: 12).

The introduction to a special issue of *Merosi niyogon* (Heritage of Ancestors) history journal by the President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmonov (1999) is a further example of such construction of Tajik statehood:

History of each people has a fateful (*sud'bonosnyi*) critical turning point (*perelomnyi etap*), when this people, which emerged from a colorful mesh of ethnic groups (*přostrogo sotsvetiřa etnosov*), for the first time realize themselves to be a single whole and, having been winged (*okryľionnyi*) by a powerful passionate (*passionarnoi*) energy of unity, steps onto the path of creating its own intellectual, civilisational, material and spiritual potential. The Samanid state – the first state created and headed by a national Tajik dynasty - became such an event in history of Tajik people. And its history convincingly manifests that throughout its existence it never practiced the cult of the sword, conquest, pillage and destruction of the other's territories. After the fall of the Samanids there were states in the history of Central Asia that have, without doubt, contributed significantly to further development of culture and arts of the region's peoples, but, at the same time, they, unfortunately, gave birth to "bloody geniuses", who destroyed other countries and peoples with sword and fire. Hundreds of thousands of innocent people, out of whose severed heads artificial hills were made, perished in those bloody conquests (1999: 3).

The text above represents the Samanid state (and by implication the Tajik people) as peace-loving and civilized in contrast to the state of the Timurids (i.e. Uzbeks) ruled by

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<sup>7</sup> The territory of 'Historical Tajikistan' is defined as that of the "first Tajik state of Samanids with absolutely predominant Tajik population and Tajik state language of administration, science, literature and art". This state occupied territories "from Afghan Pandjsher, Ghazni and Herat, Iranian Horasan in the south, to Khorezm in north-west, Isfidjab and Khafrud (Semirechie) in the north, to the limits of oases and valleys of Kashgar and Pamir in the east" (Negmatov 1992: 6).

cruel barbarians. In a few sentences, Rahmonov creates a powerful image, familiar to all those who studied history by the Soviet history textbooks. This is an example of hidden dialogicality of the Tajik historiographical discourse. The image that is being evoked is the painting by Russian Orientalist artist Vasili Vereshchagin<sup>8</sup> *Apotheosis of war* (1870-71, Tretyakov gallery), which initially was called *Tamerlane's triumph* and which was an illustration that accompanied the pages dedicated to Tamerlane's rule in Soviet history books (Hidoyatov, 1990: 157). By making reference to mounts of severed heads Rahmonov makes a clear and direct link to the persona of Tamerlane. In Soviet historiography Tamerlane was viewed as a 'second Genghis Khan', a merciless conqueror, whose invasions destroyed cities and cultural heritage of entire countries (Hidoyatov, 1990: 156). In the post-independence Uzbekistan, however, Tamerlane became a national hero, a symbol of a strong centralized statehood and past glory (Djuraev & Fayzullaev, 2002: 166-169).

**Figure 4.1. V. Vereshchagin (1871), *Apofeoz Voïny* [Apotheosis of War], State Tretyakov Gallery.<sup>9</sup>**



<sup>8</sup> Vasilii Vereshchagin was an artist-in-residence with the colonial mission led by General van Kaufman in Turkestan. He travelled to Turkestan "on special commission" of the governor-general in 1858 and 1870, after which completed his famous Orientalist series-- the *Barbarians* and *Turkestan* -- depicting battles, architecture, historical paintings and portraits of the locals, such as *Uzbek Elder*, *A Kirgiz*, *A Sart Woman*, etc.

<sup>9</sup> Image retrieved February 4, 2008, from [http://www.artrossia.ru/russian/artists/picture.php?rarity=1&pic\\_id=174&foa=f&list=1](http://www.artrossia.ru/russian/artists/picture.php?rarity=1&pic_id=174&foa=f&list=1).

Temurid epoch is seen as the 'Golden Age' to which contemporary Uzbek statehood is traced. The stature of Amir Temur has replaced the monument to Karl Marx in the centre of Tashkent in 1993, other statues of him were erected in Samarqand and Shahrisabz; the State museum of Temurid Dynasty's History was built nearby in 1996; and the 660<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Temurid State celebrated widely in the same year. Even though, as it has been said above, the pantheon of state-nominated heroes has remained virtually unchanged throughout and after the Soviet period, Amir Temur has been a notable exception in becoming an official national hero after independence. The glorification of Temur and the empire founded by him is a serious break with the Soviet writing of history, although one can trace the symbolic use of his persona back to Jadid times (Khalid, 1999: 448).

The figure of Tamerlane reappeared in Soviet period historiography in 1968, when Academician Muminov presented a research paper at the meeting of the Academy of Sciences in Tashkent (Smith et al, 1998: 72). The paper, which was followed by publications of brochures in both Russian and Uzbeks attempted to re-evaluate the role of Tamerlane in Central Asian history. It was not, however, until 1972, when two publications regarding the different aspects of Tamerlane's rule were published that a wide public reaction from within the Uzbek academia arrived. Muminov's work was branded as glorifying and idealising the figure and actions of the cruel conqueror, which in people's minds came second only to Genghis Khan as an epitome of a barbarian nomadic warrior.

The depiction of Amir Temur as a savage and tyrant is vehemently resisted in the post-independence Uzbekistan. In his 1998 speech Karimov rejects the negative image of Amir Temur as a cruel conqueror, calling him a founder of a great state, a person of immense creative abilities and a patron of arts and sciences. The President rejected the criticism of Tamerlane's cruelty as absurd, exclaiming: "A man cannot be a creator and a barbarian at one and the same time. What beautiful madrasas and mosques, what amazing palaces he built, supported the scientists and the educators! A man, who knows the Holy Quran by heart, cannot be a barbarian. Can a blood-thirsty individual come up with the aphorism such as 'The strength is in justice'?" (Karimov, 1998: 15-16).



Further, Karimov emphasizes the necessity of asserting the autochthonism of the Uzbek people to the territory of Uzbekistan by denying that they ever led a nomadic lifestyle. The Uzbek people, according to Karimov, have always been sedentary. He then rejects the Soviet tradition of dating the culmination of the ethnogenesis of the Uzbek people with the moment of acquisition by them of their contemporary name from one of the Kypchak tribes that invaded the region in 16<sup>th</sup> century.

But surely somebody lived in Mawarannahr, the territory between two rivers, before that invasion. Or perhaps those people belonged to another nation? Where is logic here? If we accept this version, we have inherited from the Soviet epoch, then a wrong conclusion follows that the history of our nation started with the coming of another wave of conquerors? In that case, where is our ancient history? If Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva belong to Uzbeks, if there was an Uzbek state here, why should we start recording our history from the XVI century, from the period, when the aliens, who had come to our lands, left their names here? Surely there were sedentary people here before they arrived! And those sedentary people surely had their own culture! Whoever invaded the region, for instance, the Mongols, who ruled from the 1220s to 1570s, mutual penetration of cultures would occur, but still the culture of the local population remained the dominant one. We know a people not by their name, but by their culture, through their spirituality, looking into the origins of its history (Karimov, 1998: 17-18).

In contrast with the Tajik narrative of an uninterrupted survival of the Tajik 'spirit' throughout conquest through preservation of the courtly Persian language and culture, Karimov appeals to the continuity of the local culture through attachment to the land. Both approaches project current conceptions of ethnic, national and state identities into the past.

The focus on the Samanid state in Tajikistan can also be explained by some of the following reasons, in accordance with the principles of historiography of 'ethnic exceptionalism'. First, chronologically Samanids precede Temurids by four centuries. Therefore, the claims for earlier ethno-genesis and acquisition of national self-consciousness during that period make Tajiks the most ancient indigenous people of the region. Second, the Samanid period coincided with what is commonly referred to as "Muslim Renaissance", which Negmatov goes on to rename "Tajik Ehyo' (Tajik Renaissance). This allows the contemporary Tajik nation to claim the enormous cultural and artistic heritage produced within the region during that period. Finally, it is consistent with the positive self-image of Tajik people as peace-loving cultured city dwellers, whose civilization is first ransacked and then stolen from them by the hordes of nomad barbarians, who sow devastation on their way and leave pyramids of skulls behind. In this account of history, the Samanid period not only temporarily precedes

the Temurid state, it is also the condition of the Temurid state's possibility. This point is best illustrated by another excerpt from Rahmonov's introduction to the special issue of "Merosi niyogon" (1999: 7-8):

If we are to talk about the civilizing (*tsivilizatsionnom*) contribution of the Samanid epoch on the regional Central Asian level, here, first of all, we must bear in mind that Tajiks, being the far-most north-eastern "wing" of the vast in its spread Aryan habitat, took upon themselves a hardest but a blessed role of enlightening within the environment of Turco-Mongolian nomadic world. This process was going on continuously, having an effect on multiple Turkic nomadic tribes, which inhabited the region's territory. Beginning from the end of the X century, with the invasion of region by new nomadic tribes, this process takes on an intensive and diverse character. ... And, although, the period, which followed the fall of the Samanid dynasty did not encourage growth of science and culture, the creative potential that was accumulated during that [Samanid] epoch...turned out to be sufficient for the preservation of the accomplishments of the great civilization and did not allow them to wither. The heritage of the Samanid epoch especially was relatively continued during the period of rule of the Temurids. Naturally, it inherited and preserved the Samanid traditions in all spheres of culture and arts.

Rahmonov earlier in that piece lists most of the great figures of medieval Central Asian Renaissance (which was part of the global 'Muslim Renaissance') as part of Samanid State's heritage. Among those figures are such world-renowned encyclopedic scientists as Muhammad al-Khwarizmi, Abu-Nasr al-Farabi, Zachariah ar-Razi (Razes), Abu Ali ibn-Sino (Avicenna), Abu Reyhan al-Beruni, Abu Abdullah Rudaki, Abu Mansur Dakiki, and Abulkosim Firdausi. Rahmonov then goes on to say:

These and many more played a definitive role in nurturing and flourishing of the culture, science and art not only of the Tajik people, but all other peoples of Central Asia. And we in this respect must not forget about their origins, their national (ethnic) identity/belonging; we must not turn them into rootless (*bez rodu i plemeni*) cosmopolites only emphasizing their belonging to the whole humanity (*obshechelovecheskuu prinadlezhnost*), which goes without saying.

Tajik Academician Mehammadjan Shukurov, in a foreword he wrote to Numon Negmatov's *Tajik Phenomenon* (1997) makes the same point. He strongly disagrees with Negmatov's statement that "Temurid civilization was Central Asian-Middle Eastern, syncretic, Turkic-Tajik – Persian -Indian". Shukurov writes:

It is necessary to emphasize that [despite partial syncretism] the development did not lose a concrete cultural basis, it [the basis] was not replaced by another ethno-cultural basis, and that this civilization was mainly Tajik-Persian, Iranian, the continuation of the renaissance processes of the Samanid epoch and XI-XII centuries, which were disrupted by Mongolian invasion, but which found a second breath during the Temurids. The rise during the Temurid times in its content and in its form of expression had Iranian character. It is necessary to be cautious of overestimating the mutual influence and interdependence of cultures. They do not form some nationally unidentifiable entity, something multi-nationally a-national / multiethnic and non-ethnic at the same time (*mnogonatsional'no-beznatsional'noie*). ... Ehyo is a concretely ethnic, a deeply national phenomenon (Shukurov in Negmatov, 1997: 14-15).

This text designates Temurid heritage as belonging to Tajik culture, regardless of the current attribution of their successes to history of Uzbek nation and statehood, distancing, however, that positive heritage of the Timurid state from the persona of Amir Timur-Tamerlane himself. Shukurov, along with other authors in Tajikistan, hyphenates ‘Tajik’, ‘Persian’, ‘Iranian’, ‘Farsi’ thus making them equivalent. The cultural achievements of the empire that dominated large portions of the Eurasian continent and had Samarkand as its capital are thus represented as only made possible by the Samanid state. This way, it can also be claimed that Samarkand was a Tajik city since time immemorial. During the Soviet period, the Samanid state was already imagined as the prototype of centralized ethnic statehood of Tajiks, however it did not have the prominence it has taken on after the end of Tajik civil war.

The national identity in Tajikistan post-independence had to be constructed with the use of the resources that could justify the sovereign statehood of Tajikistan, albeit in the borders that do not coincide with those of ‘historical Tajikistan’. However, the fact that the most significant architectural artifacts of the Samanid epoch are found in the Samanid state’s capital Bukhara, which is nowadays found on the territory of Uzbekistan serves as a constant reminder that the Tajikistan of today is not a full-bloodied embodiment of what Tajik statehood could potentially be. This poignant sense of loss and of betrayal is also a part of the national ideology, which relies on conspiracy theories to create an image of a besieged and vulnerable nation-state under a constant threat from within and without.

Anaita Khudonazar (2004) argues that the image of Uzbek “other” has been cultivated in Tajik literature since the 1970s and 1980s and was rooted in the perceived injustices done to Tajik nation in the 1920s. In particular, mourning of the loss of Bukhara and Samarkand is the recurrent theme of such literary expressions of Tajik nationalism. She cites a poem by Bozor Sobir, a famous Tajik poet, entitled *Mother Tongue*:

Everything he [the Tajik] had in this world he gave away  
 The lands of Balkh and Bukhara he had, he gave away  
 Honorable customs and collections of poems he had, he gave away,  
 Throne of Samanids he had, he gave away.  
 His enemy – beggarly in knowledge, “Donish” of Sino took away,  
 His enemy – devoid of [his own] traditions, divan of Mavlono took away,  
 His enemy – art dealer, the art of Behzod took away,

His homeless enemy took his place in his house.  
 He let the club of Rustam and Suhrob out of his hands  
 Useless barbarians he made strong,  
 His own name as the grave of Rudaki was forgotten,  
 He glorified his assassins in the whole world,  
 Low height of Manghit  
 Rose above the minaret of Khorasan,  
 Low steppes of Kipchak,  
 Became higher than the mountains of Badakhshan.

... In the eyes of those whose eyes are narrow,  
 Years of oppression he saw  
 At times in flames,  
 At times in water,  
 Layer by layer with the burned [ruins] of Sogdian minaret he burned, he  
 burned,  
 With collapsed walls of Afrosiyab gates he collapsed (Sobir 1982: 15).

Bozor Sobir here refers not only to the lost cities and homelands of Tajiks taken away by Uzbeks ('his enemy'), but also the persona of Abu Ali ibn Sino (Avicenna), the heated debates regarding the proper ethnic attribution of whom accompanied the celebrations in relation to his 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1980. The Uzbek Other is referred to as an enemy', who is 'beggary in knowledge', 'devoid of tradition', an 'art dealer', who stole Tajik's cultural heritage for his own profit and being 'homeless' (i.e. nomadic) took away his home; a 'useless barbarian', 'assassin'", a short 'Manghit' (from the name of Uzbek Manghit dynasty) with narrow eyes, who took away 'the throne of Samanids' and destroyed Tajik cultural heritage (the images of torture, ruins and burning). Once again we see a hidden reference to *mankurtism* here in the line that mentions that "his own name as Rudaki's grave has forgotten" (reference to the fact that the grave of Rudaki was not discovered until 1956; a mausoleum to him was constructed in Pendjikent in 1958). The link between remembering one's ancestors and maintaining one's identity is emphasized here again. Moreover, what Sobir's poem does is primordialise the conflict between Tajiks and Uzbeks back to the times when the events depicted in *Shahname* epic took place. It calls upon Tajiks to pick up the club of legendary Rustam and Suhrob and fight the aggressors.

In a short story called *A Song of Someone, Who Has a Noose Around his Neck* (1991) a popular Tajik writer Bahmanyor creates another depiction of history based on

juxtaposition of the Tajik and the Uzbek projected back into the Temurid period. The story takes place in a Samarkand's square, where two Tajik poets are about to be executed, following the order from Tamerlane himself. The ruler of the great empire is annoyed at the number of people, who gathered to see the execution, which to him meant the support of the poets by the Samarkandi population. As the poet performs his last song, Tamerlane is taken back in his memories to the peaceful times of his childhood. When asked by the cruel ruler what the name of the song was, the poet replies that it was a song of someone who has got a noose on his neck. Tamerlane is infuriated by the bold answer, "but he already perceived one truth: no matter how many people of this tribe he killed, how many pyramids he built out of their bodies, how many villages and cities he razed to the ground sowing with barley, these people would revive like steppe grass comes to life in spring ..." (Bahmaniyor 1991: 11).

This quote ties back to the discussion above of the powerful image of the pyramid of skulls from Vereshagin's "Apotheosis of war", which is a shorthand for genocide. There have been photographic images since Vereshagin's painting of other genocides (the Holocaust and the Pol Pot atrocities being stark examples) with pyramids of severed heads or dead bodies. What was expressed rather vaguely in Rahmonov's speech regarding the 'bloody geniuses', who built pyramids out of severed heads, becomes clear through the reading of Negmatov's claim that Temur-Tamerlane committed genocide against Tajiks, while the ancestors of Uzbeks could 'breathe with ease' and the reference in Bahmanyor's short story to the pyramids of dead bodies. The positive self-portrayal of Tajiks as peace-loving poets and artisans in opposition to the negative representations of the barbarian genocidal Uzbeks emerges with new force here.

In response to the celebrations of the Year of the Samanids in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan's famous historian Goga Hidoyatov wrote a book entitled *Krushenie Samanidov* [The Fall of the Samanids] (2004), which sparked another spiral of controversy between the Tajik and Uzbek scholars, which found its expression on the CentrAsia.ru website. Hidoyatov does not agree with the terms such as 'Tajik-Iranian literature' or 'Tajik-Persian poetry', and with the assertions that Rudaki, Firdawsi, Omar Khayyam, Saadi, Hafiz, Jami and others are the representatives of the classic Tajik literature. He writes:

First of all, it is a national shame to claim others' cultural and historical heritage, this only happens when one does not possess their own and is called 'theft'; secondly, how could the Tajiks, who in their majority resided in the mountains of Pamir and Hindukush could be Iranian, who lived thousands of kilometers away from them, had their own history, culture and classical poetry, in which Tajiks were not present (Hidoyatov 2004: 27, quoted in Usmonov, 2006).

Hidoyatov writes that the celebrations of the 'historically insignificant' Samanid state (despite the refusal of the UNESCO to sponsor the anniversary) in Tajikistan was the outcome "of the political games of the politicians of Tajikistan, objectively targeted against the neighbouring Uzbekistan" (Hidoyatov 2007).

A strong legitimizing aspect of the Samanid state as an ideology of national independence in Tajikistan is the narrative of national unity that it offers to the current regime. Rahmonov builds his legitimacy on his image as the peace-maker, who brought the warring brothers together and restored Tajik statehood. As Rahmonov put it in his speech at the opening of international seminar dedicated to 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Samanid state:

For contemporary Independent States of Central Asia, especially for Tajikistan, the lessons of the fall of the Samanid state are of special educational value (*pouchitel'ny*). ... first of all, a state can never be stable, effectively influence social processes, if internal conflict and regional contradictions are intense within. These negative phenomena, which intensified in the Samanid state, especially in the second half of X century, eventually led to its fall. Something of similar nature was observed in our country in the 1990s. If we want to have a sovereign, single united and developed Tajikistan then we – the Government of the republic, the other political forces should work towards further elimination (*izzhivanie*) of all of the phenomena and factors, which could weaken our young independent state (1999: 14).

*Vahdat* (unity, reconciliation) has become one of the key components in legitimating discourse of the regime along with discourses of *tinji* (peace) and *mirotvotchestvo* (peace-making) (Heathershaw 2006). The narrative that normatively asserts state sovereignty as the prerequisite for peace, prosperity and the very survival of national culture is necessary for the creation of an 'imagined' Tajik community. There have been and continue to be, however, simultaneously with the narrative of national unity, more region-specific examples of history-writing in Tajikistan.

## **The Tajik civil war and Regionalization of Historiography**

The late Soviet and post-independence periods in Tajikistan were marked not only by the revitalisation of national consciousness as fixed in the Soviet institutions and practices, such as established census categories, ethnic maps and the designations of identity in passports. Regional consciousness was also awakened and propelled by the existing Soviet linguistic and ethnographic research of the 'sub-ethnic' groups, such as Yaghnobis and Lakays (Wennberg 2002: 403-410). Such demands for greater regional autonomy in the form of an "upgrade" of a territorial-administrative unit within the republic, expressed in Soviet terminology, were also voiced by Hisar *rayon* (which wanted to be made into an oblast), the Autonomous Oblast of Gorno-Badakhshan (partly as an agenda of *La'li Badakhshon* organisation) demanded a status of an Autonomous Republic. Leninabad Oblast also demanded to be converted into an Autonomous Republic. Subsequently, the region even went as far as to threaten to secede from the republic completely (Martin 1997). Similar sentiments reigned in another major region of the republic - Kulob - which demanded a restoration of a Kulob oblast separate from Khatlon oblast it was a part of at the time. Finally, Gharm region (with the popular front Ashkara [Glasnost] in its avant-garde) demanded a total autonomy, or rather independence – it was declared an Islamic republic in December 1992 (Wennberg 2002: 406).

All of these regions appealed to historic symbols and figures to support their claims for greater autonomy/independence. As Wennberg reports, Gharm was the first Lenin-free town in Tajikistan already in 1991, when the largest statue of Lenin was replaced by that of Nasratulla Makhdum, the first Soviet leader of Tajikistan. Both Hisar and Khujand (which threw off the old name Leninabad under leadership of the *Eh'yoyi Hujand* organization) took turns in celebrating the 2500 years anniversaries of the cities' founding. Khujand took special pride in its being founded by Alexander the Great, while Hisar was grounding its claims for increased autonomy in its past status as the capital of Eastern Bukhara.

During the Tajik civil war (1992-1997) president Rahmonov emerged as the new leader of the republic, with the Kulob (Kulyab) region behind him as his main support base. There has thus been a tendency in the historiography during, and in the aftermath of, the inter-Tajik conflict to celebrate the great figures that came from the region and the land of Khatlon (the ancient name for Kulob) itself as a cradle of ancient culture and

civilization. Thus, *Ashakara* wanted to celebrate the prominent Islamic mystic Ali Hamadani, whose tomb is located in Kulob, to ground their initial claims for autonomy. The anniversary was celebrated on the Independence Day in 1995, while initially having been scheduled for 1994. Franz Wennberg described the exhibition dedicated to the 'Heroes of the Tajik nation' in Kulob's local history museum, which was on during Hamadani's anniversary festivities in Kulab:

While one floor was devoted to the celebrations of Ali Hamadani another floor was devoted to local 'heroes of the Tajik people'. This exhibition began with mementoes of victims from Khatlan (the area around Kulab) who had died fighting for the establishment of Soviet power in Tajikistan in the 1920s, continuing with those who had died fighting against the 'German fascists' in the Second World War, and ending with the present president, Emomali Rahmonov. Kulab had also been decorated with the busts of the Kulabi warlord sangak Safarov, who played an important role in the civil war in 1992, and the leader of *Ashkara*, Rostami Abdurahim, as well as a monument of Sangak Safarov on the wall of the restaurant where he worked. Both of them were proclaimed the Heroes of the Tajik People (Wennberg 2002: 407).

Also the year 2005 was celebrated under the aegis of UNESCO as the 2,700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kulob city.

The representatives of the marginalised Leninabad (Khujand) region, which was renamed into Sughd region after historical Sogdiana in 2000, have also tried to write history of their region. One notable example is the writing of *Khujandnama* by Arifjan Yahyazad Khujandi described by Stephane Dudoignon (2004). We can observe therefore that the 'revival' of national and regional consciousness appealed to the projections of the present identities into the distant mythical past to lend them credibility and legitimacy (Medvedev 1993, Abashin 2007).

The identities and the claims to entitlement to spatial sovereignty (increased autonomy) were articulated in Soviet vocabulary, based on the Soviet principles of hierarchical organisation of sovereignties within the matrioshka of territorial-administrative units. These identities and claims were however serving a different purpose in the changed conditions of the post-Soviet transition and civil war. Regional actors used these seemingly timeless identities and Soviet framework for making claims in order to negotiate their position in the new structure of relations of power within the republic. The paradigm of 'clans' applied by many researchers to assert an argument that Tajikistan was not a nation in a true sense but rather a conglomeration of primordial 'tribes' or kinship groups, therefore, does not stand, as these



reconfigurations of identity and territorial boundaries were creatively synthesizing historical symbols with the practices of the recent past in order to bargain for power within the existing boundaries of the Tajik state, rather than challenging those boundaries.

## **Dealing with Independence**

While the Tajik ideas of statehood after the civil war are based on the notions of unity and peace and the heroic role of the president in achieving both, the Uzbek state has consciously developed an Ideology of National Independence that raises sovereignty itself to the status of national ideology. A narrative of a centuries-long anti-colonial struggle of the Uzbeks is the foundation of this state ideology. The figure of the president here as well is that of a national leader who championed sovereignty and independence for Uzbekistan even under the oppressive regime of the 'Red Empire'. Let us, for example, consider some excerpts from a book written by two of the leading academics at the Institute of History within the Uzbek Academy of Sciences. In their book, *Uzbekistan in the period between 1917-1990's: the struggle of ideas and ideologies* (2002), Dilorom Alimova's and Aleksandr Golovanov's write:

Since times immemorial the unbeatable spirit of freedom and independence was an unalienable part of the moral ethical ideas that were being formed during and leading the society of early Uzbek states, an important feature of the developing national character and national self-consciousness of Uzbek people. The ideals of freedom invariably inspired Uzbek people, served as a firm spiritual-patriotic bridge connecting the past and the future. From generation to generation, the names of those, who valued independence and prosperity of Motherland above all; those, who sacrificed their lives for it. Through millennia and ages the tales of heroism of national patriots -Shirak, Spitamen, Mukanna, Djaloliddin Manguberdi and many other brave [muzhestvennykh] fighters for independence- have reached us (Alimova and Golovanov 2002: 6).

The book directly connects the ideology of national independence with the practice of history writing through representation of the entire history of humankind as the struggle between ideas and ideologies. The ideologies are in hierarchical relations with one another with some being 'good' and others 'evil', and correspondingly, 'genuine' and 'false', 'indigenous' and 'foreign', 'creative' and 'destructive'. The book especially seeks to demonstrate that Soviet ideology, being alien to the 'national mentality of Uzbek people', had only negative consequences for its 'historical development'. Alimova and

Golovanov emphasize that throughout the Soviet period, the fight of the Uzbek people for “free self-determination and restoration of national statehood” never ceased.

The whole history of humanity is punctured [*pronizana*] by the never-ending struggle between the forward (progressive) and antihuman ideas and ideologies, reflecting the multiplicity of goals and interests of different social strata, political movements, nations and peoples, separate states and societal systems. The dialectic of this side of the historical process has found its expression in the compressed formula of the global antagonism between “good” and “evil”, which was formed at the very dawn of humanity (Alimova and Golovanov 2002: 3).

Within this Manichean narrative of world history, the trope of “*mankurt*” crops up almost invariably, when talking about the Soviet period in particular. Alimova and Golovanov write:

During more than 70-year experience of existence [of the USSR], the Soviet authorities have vividly demonstrated that the communist ideology was programmed to alienate a person from everything: from property, from culture, from their own nation. Its [communist ideology's] philosophy was genetically foreign to the national idea, mentality of Uzbek people (Alimova and Golovanov, 2002: 9).

Not recognizing the Soviet efforts of state-building in the region as the channel of genuine self-determination of the local peoples Alimova and Golovanov endorse Turkiston muhtoriyati (Turkestan/Kokand Autonomy) as the paradigmatic case of genuine model of national state building, reflecting the conceptual principles developed by the indigenous nationalist elite, the Jadids (Alimova and Golovanov, 2002: 21).

Similarly, in the eleventh grade history textbook *History of Uzbekistan: Period of National Independence* (2002), Narzulla Djuraev and Tursunbay Fayzullaev refer to the period beginning in 1991 as the ‘renaissance epoch’. According to the authors, Uzbek people have always strove and fought for independent statehood. They write:

The collapse of the USSR and the rebirth of the independent Uzbekistan were both events that were to be expected [*nosit zakonomernyĭ kharakter*]. Uzbek people always strove to resurrect their independence. This fact has been emphasized by president Islam Karimov in his speeches on many occasions: “Uzbek people since the times immemorial lived and fought for its independence. History itself bears evidence to that. The truth regarding the history of our people must become known to the civilized world and first of all our young generation must learn about it. To leaf through and to learn the pages of our history is the obligation of each patriot” (Djuraev and Fayzullaev, 2002: 7).

The authors themselves define the tasks of the post-independence historical science as to “explain the inevitability and regularity (*zakonomernost'*) of the emergence of sovereign Uzbekistan, whose experience of statehood counts many millennia, on the

political map of the world” and to “study the historical continuity (*preemstvennost*) in the rebirth of sovereign Uzbekistan” (Djuraev and Fayzullaev, 2002: 4).

The goal of the authors of the new state is to assert that there was nothing accidental or contingent in the emergence of sovereign Uzbekistan on the word map. They, therefore, interpret the outcomes of the referendum of the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 1991<sup>10</sup> in the following way:

The evidence to the gradual movement towards the republic's independence by the leadership and the Uzbek people are the results of the referendum that took place on March 17<sup>th</sup> 1991. Besides the questions approved by the Higher Council of the USSR, a new question was added to the main list on the ballot papers. It asked from people the following: “Do you agree that Uzbekistan will enter the renewed union (Federation) as a (*ravnopravnaia*) republic enjoying equal rights [with others]?” 93.9% of the voters expressed their opinion as being in favour. Thus, the referendum demonstrated that the overwhelming majority of the voters gave their voice in favour of independence and therefore expressed their full support to the policies conducted by the leadership of the republic (Djuraev and Fayzullaev, 2002: 18).

Alimova and Golovanov report the results of the same referendum in a similar fashion:

We can judge about the political mood among the population of Uzbekistan, their real will at that time by the outcomes of the referendum regarding the future of the republic that was conducted in the beginning of 1991. To the question on the ballot paper: “Do you agree that Uzbekistan remains within the renewed Union (Federation) as a sovereign republic?” 93.9% of all those who cast their votes expressed support to independence and to equality (*ravnopravnii*) of Uzbekistan.

This clearly expressed support of the idea of sovereignty on the part of the multiethnic population of Uzbekistan gave the leadership of the republic a firm confidence in the rightfulness of the chosen political course, of the difficult struggle with imperial forces of the Centre (Alimova and Golovanov, 2002: 78).

Therefore, the official representations interpret the results of the referendum of March 17<sup>th</sup> 1991 as the manifestation of the will of Uzbek people for sovereignty. By emphasizing the part of the wording in the ballot question that defined the role of the member states in the renewed Union as ‘sovereign’ or ‘enjoying equal rights’, they equate the affirmative answer with the desire for political independence. The outcomes

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<sup>10</sup>The decision to conduct a referendum on preservation of the Soviet Union, which asked the electorate “Do you consider it necessary to preserve the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics, in which the rights and freedoms of people of all nationalities will be guaranteed in full measure?” was adopted in December of 1990 at the Fourth all-Union Convention of the People's Deputies (*s'ezd narodnih deputatov*). In many republics the main question was accompanied by additional questions, often contradicting the main one. Six out of fifteen Union republics – Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Armenia, Moldavia and Georgia – refused to take part in the referendum. The ambiguous wording of the main question, inclusion of additional questions, and failure to make a reference to the new Union treaty make it hard to interpret the results of the referendum unequivocally.

of the referendum, according to such interpretation, are in exact opposition to how those, who formulated the question, intended it to sound.

Illustrative of this logic is the reaction expressed by Islam Karimov in his speech, given on the day following the adoption by Russian *Duma* of the decree that declared the dissolution of the Soviet Union illegal and in violation of the will of the majority of population, as expressed in the referendum of the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 1991:

Let us have a look at the referendum that took place on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 1991, which they refer to. Then it was the Soviet period – the period of the totalitarian regime. And the referendum of the 17<sup>th</sup> of March was conducted in the conditions of pressure. At that time in Uzbekistan, a second ballot paper was included. For the citizens of Uzbekistan on the territory of our country we offered the second ballot paper. In other words, along with the question offered by the all-union referendum, offered by the Centre, we put forward our own as well. In its essence, our question was in contradiction with the question asked by the Centre, and they mutually cancelled one another, they were mutually exclusive. We asked that question from people. That is why, we can say with the full evidence, that the attitude of the people of Uzbekistan to the question asked by the referendum of the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 1991 was expressed at that time clearly and firmly (Karimov 1996).

Whereas the textbook version does not even mention that the referendum was on the preservation of the Soviet Union rather than independence of Uzbekistan, Karimov's speech was a response to the argument by the Russian parliamentarians that the dissolution was illegal as it ignored the will of the people as expressed in the results of the referendum.

The work that Karimov speech did, initially, was to assert the independence of Uzbekistan as legitimized by the results of the 17<sup>th</sup> of March referendum, rather than being questioned by those results. In order to achieve this rhetorical goal, Karimov first says that the referendum was conducted 'under the conditions of pressure' during the 'period of a totalitarian regime' and, therefore, those results are not to be trusted as the genuine expression of the will of the people. Second, Karimov then says that Uzbek citizens were offered an alternative question that contradicted the main question of the referendum formulated by the Centre. He omits the actual wordings of the questions from his line of argumentation. Neither does he explain why the question offered by the Uzbek authorities was not subject to the 'conditions of pressure' of the totalitarian regime under which the referendum was taking place.

This initial discursive construction by Karimov in reaction to a suggestion of the prospect of resurrection of the USSR was then elaborated by the historians, who simply took the word “sovereign” out of the original context of the question regarding whether the Union should be preserved in some new form and whether Uzbekistan should become a member of that union as a ‘sovereign’ republic. The inevitability of independence of Uzbekistan cannot be questioned in the official discourse. Independence, according to the authoritative history discourse in Uzbekistan, was a result of the prolonged and bitter struggle of Uzbeks for sovereign statehood, an outcome of the natural course of history. In the same speech given on March 16<sup>th</sup> 1996, Karimov said:

Our reply is short and decisive: your will is in your hands, but the path of Uzbekistan is known. The people of Uzbekistan will never and in no way allow chaining them, to return to the old regime. This is clearer than a bright day. I will say it again: the wheel of history cannot be spun backwards. This is nature, this is life, this is history. Who can deny this centuries-old law of nature? (Karimov 1996).

In summation, the official historiographical discourse in Uzbekistan provides us with the narrative of an eternal existence of Uzbek nation as a source for sovereign statehood. Therefore, the acquisition of independence in 1991 as a result of the collapse of the USSR is still interpreted as a “rebirth” of national sovereign statehood rather than its accidental “birth”, even despite the absence of an independence movement and the results of the referendum of March 17<sup>th</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

The historiographies of post-independence Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have been consistent with the post-independence models of their statehood. On the Tajik side there is an emotional longing and grief for the loss of the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand and a refusal by many representatives of the intelligentsia, especially historians and writers to accept the existing boundaries of the designated Tajik homeland. Uzbekistan’s historiography, on the other hand, has been on the defensive, asserting and protecting the right of the Uzbek people for independent statehood on the territories that have been designated as their ethnic homeland in 1929 (the

‘sovereignty-protecting’ model). Both positions are informed by the specifically Soviet conceptions of ethnicity and national self-determination.

In this chapter, the discursive practices of sovereignty-assertion were analysed by means of predicate, metaphor and narrative analysis. The Möbian play of *differance* within historiographical discursive encounters allows each side to advance their conception of self, based on the established repertoires of Soviet history writing. The Soviet theory of ‘ethnos’, and tradition of writing ‘ethno-genesis’ have provided Tajik and Uzbek politicians and academics with a “post-factum justification for the inevitability of ‘the empire’s disintegration’ and ‘acquisition of independence’” (Abashin, 2007: 298). In other words, the language of ‘ethnos’, ‘ethnonym’, and ‘ethno-genesis’ has been re-appropriated by the politicians, journalists and wider circles of academia in order to legitimise the very existence of the new states in Central Asia.

## Chapter Five

# The Roghun controversy

*“Roghun is the symbol of being of our nation.*

*It stands for life or death of the Tajik state!”*

*(Siddikov 2010)*

This chapter presents the second ‘discursive encounter’ and explores the spatial dimension of sovereignty construction. In this case study, I am interested in ways in which sovereignty and identity, security and territoriality are intertwined in the daily business of constructing and maintaining a state. In particular I am examining the on-going controversy that has surrounded the plans by the Tajik government to resume the construction of the Roghun hydropower station on the Vakhsh river. If completed according to the original Soviet project of 1965, it will become the highest dam in the world (335 meters) and is projected to produce 13.3 TW/h (terawatt/hour) of energy annually, which is promised to cover the internal households’ and industrial consumer needs and sufficient excess for export to the Asian markets. Such source of energy is advocated by the government as a means of overcoming the dependence on Uzbek energy and infrastructure as well as a jumpstart to the republic’s economy. Uzbekistan, which is located downstream from the projected dam and hydropower plant, has been vehemently objecting to the construction. This has resulted in a series of heated diplomatic exchanges, a railroad blockade of Tajik goods, electricity and gas supplies cuts, posturing and hostile behaviour on the borders as well as ‘information warfare’ in the press of the respective states.

### **Soviet ‘hydraulic mission’ in Central Asia**

Roghun hydropower station project was initially conceived and planned by the central water management authorities of the USSR. In the Soviet Union, dam construction was a state-controlled enterprise, which until its transfer to the Ministry of Energy in 1960, was under the jurisdiction of the KGB. Therefore, the construction of large dams was treated as an issue of 'state security'. The symbols of progress and achievement of the socialist labour were also the testimony to the oppressive and violent side of the state, with prisoners of gulags providing the slave labour necessary for construction of giant hydroprojects of the industrialising Soviet state (McCully 2001: 17).

Central Asia was the site of the most ambitious projects of the Soviet 'hydraulic mission', its main focus being expansion of cotton cultivation and electricity-intensive industries such as aluminium production. Hydraulic projects were seen as central to modernisation and Sovietisation of Central Asia. It was arguably an extension of the colonialist exploitation of the region as a gargantuan cotton plantation, but it was also part of any modern state's agenda of modernisation, progress and development. When, in the 1930s, two senior party officials questioned the wisdom of the party policy of converting vast expanses of Central Asian deserts into cotton plantations, they were prosecuted for 'bourgeois nationalism' and executed as the enemies of the people (McCully 2001: 18). Perhaps, the most extreme illustration of the impact of water diversions for cotton production is the desiccation of the Aral Sea. Since the 1960s, the flow of Amu Darya and Syr Darya into the Aral Sea has completely stopped due to the complex web of dams, reservoirs, and canals used for cultivation of cotton in the region. In the 1990s the Aral Sea was reduced to less than half of its size in 1960. These days, the remaining area of the Sea is reduced to three hyper-saline and rapidly shrinking pools.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Aral Sea tragedy is normally seen as an unexpected consequence of the ineffective and myopic Soviet water management policies. However, some authors have argued that the Soviet policy-makers actually planned the disappearance of the Aral Sea. It was the opinion of Joseph Stalin that 'water which is allowed to enter the sea is wasted' (McCully 2001: 237). Pearce writes at a museum in Nukus he had seen a series of maps drawn in 1970s by the Soviet planners that projected total disappearance of the sea by the year 2000 and designated newly-available lands for rice and cotton cultivation (Pearce 1992: 204-5). McCully confirms that a map issued by the USSR's Academy of Sciences in 1981 indeed projected the sea to be dry before 2000 and that a 1987 magazine article proclaimed: "May the Aral Sea die in a beautiful manner. It is useless." (McCully 2001: 44-45).



Everywhere in the world the massive irrigation projects had detrimental impact on environment and livelihoods of local people. They resulted in the loss of lands, and with them of architectural and archeological artefacts, led to disappearance of indigenous lifestyles and cultures, negatively affected the environment, water quality and wild-life. Moreover, large dam projects demanded enormous economic and labour resources and mass displacement of people. Mid-1980s saw the emergence of a global movement opposing the dam-building practices. This worldwide anti-dam movement was echoed during the *perestroika* era in the Soviet Union (Dams 2000). The protests against dams' construction were a part of the larger Union-wide phenomenon of eco-nationalism as the union republics were trying to carve out greater sovereignty from the centre.<sup>2</sup>

In Central Asia, eco-nationalism during *perestroika* focused mostly on the effects of the cotton monoculture and nuclear and biological weapons testing sites on the environment and health of the population. The new 'informal' political movements in Tajikistan during *perestroika* opposed the construction of the Roghun dam and the flooding of villages and the population resettlements that would result from it (Khudonazar 2004: 19). Such population resettlements took place in Soviet Tajikistan mostly either due to inundation of the lands after damming or to populate the newly irrigated areas. This had disastrous consequences for the highlanders forcefully dislocated onto the plains where they had to cultivate cotton (Schoeberlein 2000, Roy 2000; Sodiqov 2009). The Yaghnob valley dwellers whose traditional way of life was destroyed by the 1970s policy of forced relocation of the people to the plains endured much hardship as a result (Schoeberlein 2000: 43). Populations of Gharm, Darvaz and Karategin were relocated to the Republic's southeastern region of Qurghonteppa in the 1950s.

From 1965 to 1978, the first feasibility study and a design for construction of the Roghun project were developed by the Soviet design institute Hydroproject Tashkent.

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<sup>2</sup>In Latvia, for example, the campaign against the construction of the hydrodam on the Daugava River in 1986 was the harbinger of organised dissent against the Soviet Union. The river became the symbol of the nation, its natural beauty and the ancestral burial grounds that were about to be violated by the dam construction stirred up eco-nationalism, thus making Daugavpils campaign the 'dress rehearsal for the Popular Front' (McCully 2001: 292). Similar campaign took place in Georgia where eco-nationalists staged protests against the Khudoni Dam which brought about a complete halt in the construction in 1989.

Preparatory construction works began in 1979 and the main construction activities started in 1982. The scope of work implemented from 1976 to 1990 constitutes a significant volume of construction, comprising both underground work and surface facilities. However, the ecological organisations, people from the flooding zone, and representatives of intelligentsia's technical and scientific circles, expressed their opposition to the construction and reservations concerning the reliability of the principal technical solutions of the project. In the 1980s, the Garmis who were expected to relocate to make room for Roghun reservoir opposed the policy. There was a short-lived debate around the issue of involuntary resettlement of people which mobilised the disenfranchised Garmis politically and was arguably one of the contributing factors in the breakout of the Tajik civil war (Sodiqov 2009). As a result an independent expert assessment under a state committee within Gosplan was conducted. The assessment confirmed the reliability of the existing project. However, the previous momentum of the construction was lost (RusAl 2005). During a flood in 1993, the diversion tunnels were blocked, which caused overtopping of the 45 meter high upstream embankment cofferdam, which was subsequently washed away.

It is estimated that the Roghun project would force the resettlement of over 30,000 people. The Tajik authorities started the resettlement of people from Nurobod district in Rasht valley to Dangara in late May 2009. The first 232 families have already been relocated as their houses will be submerged by the water filling up the Roghun reservoir. Although some Tajik commentators have been reported to warn against displacement of people in light of the recent Tajik history of inter-regional conflict, the issue has been conspicuously absent from public discussions around Roghun construction (Sodiqov 2009). There seems to be no opposition on the part of the oustees nor outcry from human rights activists. In contrast to pre-independence debates, there seems to be a remarkable consensus regarding the desirability and feasibility of the project within Tajik society. This chapter offers an analysis of how such consensus is manufactured by the political actors in Tajikistan and what part the confrontation with Uzbekistan plays in solidifying the seeming public unanimity on this potentially contentious issue.

## The Vakhsh River cascade

The projected Roghun hydropower plant (HPP) is part of the cascade of dams and reservoirs on the Vakhsh River located in Tajikistan. Once completed the dam would be one of the tallest in the world at 335 meters and would be 1,500 meters wide. The reservoir would have a total storage volume of 13.5 million cubic meters over 10.3 km<sup>3</sup>. It is projected to produce three million 600 thousand megawatt of electricity each year. It is estimated that it would take seven to twelve years for the Vakhsh River to fill the reservoir (Leon 2010). The cascade includes 600-MW Baipaza, 240-MW Golovnaya, 24-MW Perepadnaya, 15-MW Tsentral'naya and 3,000-MW Nurek stations. Under construction within the cascade are the 3,600-MW Roghun, 670-MW Sangtuda-1 and 220-MW Sangtuda-2. Moreover, two more projects have been proposed within the cascade: the 200-MW Nurobod-2 and 850-MW Shurob (PennEnergy 2009). The dam which is currently the world's highest, Nurek<sup>3</sup>, located on the Vakhsh River in Tajikistan, was completed in 1975. It is an artificial mountain of earth and rock 300 meters high (McCully 2001: 5), which was created by a giant explosion that basically broke off a part of a mountain. Since a structure made of metal and cement was too expensive to construct, the 'use of local materials was preferred'.<sup>4</sup>

The Roghun project was conceived during the Soviet period as a dual-purpose project: as means of regulating the irrigation water management at Amu-Darya River as well as the station for generation of hydroelectricity. It was projected to be located only seventy kilometres upstream from Nurek to form a part of a cascade of hydropower plants on the Vakhsh River. A newspaper article from the time emphasised the importance of the project for further expansion of production of cotton in the region:

Nurek artificial sea has already given the farmers millions of cubic meters of water. But it is incapable of providing the vital moisture in necessary quantities. The problem will be solved when the Roghun Sea is here. Without that [reservoir] the capacity of Amu Darya to irrigate the lands

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<sup>3</sup> Nurek construction displaced at least 1,800 people (official data). The reservoir area is 9,800 ha. The installed capacity of the generators is 2,700 megawatt. Like Roghun, Nurek is a multipurpose dam (energy and irrigation use).

<sup>4</sup> Otahon Latifi, "Gora polegla poperek Vakhsha", 1968. This journalistic report from the site of construction is filled with certain romance and poetry. The author exhorts the might of the explosion, the power of the man to stop the flow of river and the zeal of socialist workers are all combined with a reference to Central Asian legend of Farhad and Shirin. According to the legend, Farhad brought water to the people by cutting a channel through a rock mountain, as a reward he was given the hand of a beautiful girl called Shirin. The article reports: "These days the address of Farhad is Vakhsh. On the lands, which since the times immemorial have not 'seen' any water other than snow and rain, we shall grow cotton!"

will be completely exhausted by year 1985. Karshi, Amu-Bukhara and Karakum canals [located in Uzbekistan --MS] will receive enough water and under the hot sun of Middle Asia new oases will green...<sup>5</sup>

Both Nurek and Roghun were conceived, however, not only as means to regulate the flow of water for irrigation purposes. These dams were planned in conjunction with construction of the aluminium plant in Regar in order to supply the smelter with cheap electricity. Unlike other forms of smelting, which rely on heat, the production of aluminium requires passing a powerful electric current through alumina (processed from the ore, bauxite). Electricity is the second biggest cost factor in aluminium production after raw materials. The hydroelectric and aluminium industries have been inextricably linked since both first emerged. Aluminium smelters are the largest customers for many of the world's most powerful dams (McCully 2001).

Both aluminium industry and the hydropower in Tajikistan are still formally state-owned. However, after closer scrutiny, it appears that the governing elites have 'privatised' the state (*Avesta.tj* 2010, March 31). Thus, the Tajik Aluminium Company's (TALCO) director is the president's son-in-law and the earnings are deposited in an off-shore account and thus no tax is paid to the Tajik state (Heathershaw 2011: 158). The major foreign currency source for the Republic, the TALCO Aluminium Plant, consumes up to 40% of all electricity produced by the Republic. It is therefore not surprising that aluminium industry, as the main potential beneficiary of the Roghun is closely connected with the revival of the project. In October 2004, Russian Aluminium (RusAl) and the Government of Tajikistan reached an agreement to resume work with the aim of completing construction of the first stage of the project, primarily for the supply of power for existing and new aluminium smelters in Tajikistan. In February 2005 RusAl commissioned Lehmeier International of Germany to carry out a bankable feasibility study for Stage 1 completion of the scheme. The final report of this study was issued in December 2006 (Schmidt 2008: 30).

### *The Aral Sea basin water management institutions*

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<sup>5</sup> Otahon Latifi, "Ryadom s orlinnym gnezdom"[Near the Eagle's Nest], from *The Last Spring of Otahon Latifi: Book of Memory*, 2006, pp. 98-101

The Aral Sea basin in which all Central Asian states are located is formed by two large rivers – the Amu Darya and Syr Darya. Vakhsh is a tributary of the Amu Darya River which originates in the territory of Afghanistan, then continues its flow in Tajikistan, forming its southern border with Afghanistan, flows into Turkmenistan and ends up in Uzbekistan.

Figure 5. 1. The Aral Sea basin



The system of management of the surface water resources formed in the basin of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya was only introduced by the federal centre in mid-1980s (Polat 2002: 136). These structures were tasked with calculating the needs of water for agricultural purposes and establishing consumption quotas as well as energy reimbursement to the upstream republics during the winter months. This system was carried on into the independent statehood period. Following the breakup of the USSR, on February 18, 1992, the new states of Central Asia agreed to maintain the Soviet system of water management in the region. As a result of this agreement the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC) with Secretariat in Khojent, Tajikistan and Scientific Information Centre in Tashkent, Uzbekistan was established.

The water resources management in the Amu Darya River basin is characterised by the persistence of the mechanisms of water distribution that have been carried on from the Soviet system designed in 1980s. Wegerich writes that, rather than being guided by the new paradigm of integrated water resources management (IWRM) based on the principles of water management according to hydrological rather than administrative boundaries and equitable distribution of water among the riparian states (with the Aral sea being considered as one of the 'users' of water), the present water management has been driven by the increased demands on water in both upstream and downstream states (Wegerich 2010: 44). Water utilisation in the Amu Darya basin has remained biased towards the agricultural needs of Uzbekistan. Even though officially an annual water quota has been allocated to the Aral Sea as one of the riparian users, in reality data suggests that no water has in fact reached the Aral Sea in the past two decades. As a result of the policy of food self-sufficiency after independence in both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, even more water than before is being withdrawn for wheat cultivation.

Overall, observers have noted that the water management system in Central Asia is unbalanced. The very fact that the research institute holding vital information regarding the water flows and other regional water management institutions are physically located in Uzbekistan makes other states suspicious of their integrity (Horsman 2001). Moreover, it has been noted that that the system does not provide for a mechanism for dispute resolution (Wegerich 2010; Weinthal 2001; Vinogradov and Langford 2001). The 1992 agreement refers water disputes to the relevant ministries in the five republics, but fails to designate a mechanism in case the respective ministries do not succeed in resolving the disagreements.

### **The points of contention since independence**

The fundamental disagreement between the states in Central Asia stems from the conflict of interests between the upstream and downstream states. According to the World Bank, ninety six percent of volume of the region's two great rivers' flow is utilised in watering of the eight million hectares of the irrigated land in the basin (Abdullaev 2001). Irrigated land provides ninety percent of all crops produced in the region.

Cotton, which is responsible for 76 percent of Uzbekistan's hard currency revenue, occupied the total area of 1.33 million hectares (approximately 35.9 percent of total irrigated land area – *my estimate*) in 2004 (International Crisis Group 2005).

Under the existing water agreements the three downstream states – Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – receive 73 % of total withdrawals from the Aral Sea Basin. While Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan – the region's upstream states – are the source of 90 % of all water in the Aral Sea basin, they are entitled to only 12.2 % and 0.6 %, respectively. Uzbekistan is believed to consume in excess of the allocated 43 % of the Amu Darya's flow, while Tajikistan is only entitled to 13.6 % (see table below).

**Table 5.1. The ICWC water allocation plan in the Aral Sea basin, April 6, 1992, and areas of irrigation (Source: Polat 2002: 140).**

	Amu Darya Allocation (% of volume)	Syr Darya Allocation (% of volume)	Aral Sea Basin (% of volume)	Aral Sea Basin Irrigated Areas (ha)
Kazakhstan	--	38.1	12	786,200
Kyrgyzstan	0.4	1	0.6	422,000
Tajikistan	13.6	9.2	12.2	719,000
Turkmenistan	43	----	29.4	1,735,000
Uzbekistan	43	51.7	45.7	4,233,000

Timing is also of essence in the patterns of water consumption between the upstream and downstream states. Since the downstream states want to maximise the water flow during the vegetation periods and avoid flooding caused by winter release of water for energy projection upstream, Central Asian states had developed a system of barter exchanges – 'water for energy' schemes. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan made a series of deals that obligated Uzbekistan to supply Tajikistan with energy (natural gas, oil and electricity) during the winter months in exchange for a steady supply of water in the winter months. Such deals have been fraught with complications. Deals have been frequently suspended or broken unilaterally thus causing considerable tensions in the bi-lateral relations.

Even though international law is often invoked in the debates regarding the proper water use in the region, the agreements signed among Central Asian states were not given the status of international law (Horsman 2001). Moreover, the regional water management institutions located in Uzbekistan are not recognised by state legislatures and therefore lack legitimacy. There are also problems with the institutional set up of water managing ministries within the republics. For instance, Wegerich found that the merger of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Melioration and Water Management in 1997 in Uzbekistan resulted in the subordination of water management under the needs of agriculture, namely, the government demands for cotton and wheat production (Wegerich 2010: viii).

These tensions were exacerbated by the draught of 2000 when the annual volume of Amu Darya and Syr Darya was significantly reduced (Abdullaev 2001: 28-29). The desire of the upstream states to increase their area of their irrigated lands and to increase the use of hydropower had led many analysts to consider the risks of conflicts over water in the region. Various international agencies' programmes aim at reducing tensions through cooperation projects bringing different ethnic communities together to deal with water management matters in the Ferghana Valley (Bichsel 2009).

Furthermore, the extremely cold winter of 2008 resulted in an energy crisis in the region with the hydrocarbon-rich downstream states withholding energy supplies to the poor upstream states in order to meet domestic needs. The governments in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan had to release water from their reservoirs to produce energy thus causing floods downstream. Because of the breakdown of the regional system of energy exchanges during that harsh winter weather, the population in Tajikistan suffered from lack of heating and electricity. Reportedly new-born infants and patients on life support machines at the unheated hospitals died. The Tajik government uses the desperate situation on the consumer market to justify the plans of further development of their hydropower projects.<sup>6</sup>

### **Securitisation of Roghun**

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<sup>6</sup> Over 50 percent of both Kyrgyzstan's and Tajikistan's electricity production is generated by hydropower plants.



During the first week of March 2010 Roghun was the main subject in all the main Uzbek newspapers. Almost all of the articles talk of the “serious concerns of the society” that the decision of the Tajik government to start the construction of the Roghun HPP has stirred up and the potential threat to the security of many millions of people in the region such construction may entail. *UzA* agency’s *Projects of gigantic HPPs in the Central Asian region are a threat to the security of millions of people* was published in practically all the newspapers. An article by a Kyrgyz observer Aleksandr Knyazev, who compared the construction of Roghun to Kyrgyzstan’s own great HPP project in Kambarata, was discussed in the *UzA*’s piece. Knyazyev is quoted calling both of the projects “crimes, directed against own and neighbour-states’ populations”. *Milliy Tiklanish* newspaper on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March printed an article called *Harm to nature* talking of the “great threats” of the construction of Roghun and evoking the traditions of centuries-long shared water use of the great grandfathers. *XXI Asr* on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March published an opinion piece called “A dangerous path”, in which the issue is referred to as a “matter of life and death”. The Roghun construction is therefore securitised as an existential threat by state actors in Uzbekistan. Various sources of danger and threat emanating from the project are emphasised. Should it be implemented, according to Uzbek side, Roghun construction would lead to real threats to human and environmental security. Within this discourse of danger a number of metaphors and modes of talking on the issue are employed.

In his work *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* David Campbell (1998) pointed out the link between state and body, security and identity. In his discussion of the ‘discourses of danger’ as central to the constitution of state identity and articulation of ‘national interests’ and issues of security, Campbell refers to the trope of the body as a vital discursive device, which helps delineate the boundaries between the inside and outside, the self and other (9). Therefore, the discourse of illness and madness as threats to the integrity and health of the body politic and medical intervention is the staple of the ‘discourses of danger’. Thus, the cleanliness and health of the body and soul are likened to the vitality and morality of a state and the people. This conflation of health and cleanliness issues with morality and their expression through water metaphors is also observed by Strang (2004).

Water is involved in the homological metaphor of belonging as the 'essence' of social connections – blood. Veronica Strang's research on water in Dorset suggests that 'water plays a vital part in the construction of identity' at all levels – from local to national to the ideas of shared humanity (Strang 2004: 5). The importance of 'blood' in the construction of kinship, ethnic, racial, local and national identities has long been established. Water in this discursive encounter acts as a 'source of life', essential for 'development' of a nation-state, its 'integrity' and 'independence' for its 'cycles of life and death' (Strang 2004: 79).

In our discursive encounter between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan we also observe the centrality of water as a purifying substance and the essence of life. Water is essential for life and therefore is seen as the essence *of* life (it is a 'life and death matter' both literally and symbolically).<sup>7</sup> The rivers and channels are likened to 'arteries'<sup>8</sup> carrying the life-giving force of water. By the extension of this metaphor the dams are 'thrombi' blocking the arteries and preventing the 'self-purification' and natural rejuvenation of the 'blood' of the rivers, leading to 'stagnation'.<sup>9</sup> The body trope extends to the racial and biological essence of the nation inhabiting the territory of the state as well as emotionally charged link to the earth and 'Mother nature'. The pollution of the earth and other elements are depicted as direct harm to the natural habitat of the organic nature and damaging the 'genofond' (genome fund/biodiversity) of the nation.<sup>10</sup>

Society itself is thus imagined as a corporate body in which order or 'health' is maintained by the movements, actions of the individuals who share its identity or substance. These are familiar metaphors: discourses about identity (and particularly race) have long employed terms such as 'purity', and 'dilution' or 'adulteration' to express the sameness or difference of groups of people (Strang 2004: 123).

Strang quotes Tuan (1968) who pointed out how the above metaphor of rivers as blood vessels works both ways in the logic that equates microcosms with macrocosms (synecdoche and metonymy), which is recurrent in theological and scientific texts: "[Man's] blood, which disperseth itself by the branches of veins through all the body,

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<sup>7</sup> A satirical depiction of water as the essence of one's being, as defining one's identity, is found in Stanley Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove* (1964), where deranged general Jack D. Ripper gives the following speech: "I can no longer sit back and allow communist infiltration, communist indoctrination, communist subversion and the International Communist Conspiracy to sap and impurify all of our precious bodily fluids".

<sup>8</sup> "Controlling the arteries, which bring life", *Qishloq Hayoti* newspaper, 25 March 2009

<sup>9</sup> "Thrombi of the dams. Who will estimate the consequences?", *Pravda Vostoka*, 15 September 2009?

<sup>10</sup> "Held hostage by a poisonous executioner", *XXI Asr* newspaper, 30 April 2009

may be resembled to those waters which are carried by brooks and rivers all over the earth” (Raleigh in Tuan 1968:59).

The human body lends itself perfectly to organic systemic metaphors. Bodily fluids, especially such symbolically significant ones as blood, allow metaphorical leaps from the microcosm of human body to the macrocosm of human environment, from human health to issues of environmental balance and sustainability. By the same logic, the issues of pollution and other ecological harm are often metaphorically and analytically couched in terms of bodily disease, while social and political issues are often discussed in terms of madness and spiritual decay. Once again we see the issues of health, cleanliness and morality as well as the notions of sin, death and pollution conflated in the discourse (Strang 2004: 92).

Such discursive moves create moral geographies of inside and outside, self and other. Recent research on the media coverage of the boundary dispute between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1999-2000 explores the issues of moral geographies in a discursive encounter between the two countries (Megoran 2004). In particular, Megoran finds from his analysis of Uzbek press coverage of the matters related to the border, that inter-state boundaries are not just lines on the map or physically delineated structures on the ground – they represent moral boundaries between a ‘series of binary dualisms: order and disorder, progress and backwardness, stability and chaos, wealth and poverty’ (Megoran 2004: 740). The ‘skin’ of the body politic of the state therefore is in constant danger of being penetrated by all sorts of ‘pollution’ -- be it environmental pollution from the Tajik aluminium plant or infestation of locust, moral pollution of pornography, Islamism, extremism and drug trafficking.

Christine Bichsel in her work on irrigation disputes in the Ferghana valley has explored ‘interdependence of irrigation, territoriality and construction of nations’ in Central Asia (Bichsel 2009: 11). Looking at how people attribute meaning to water locally, she examined several case studies through the paradigm of local sayings and proverbs about water. One of the proverbs she used as a prism of her analysis was “El bashy bolgucha, suu bashy bol”, which in translation from Kyrgyz means “Better be the head of the water than the head of the people” (Bichsel 2009: 49).

The same scheme works on the regional scale. A metaphor of the entire region 'as a single organism' is applied in order to articulate threats ('harm', 'suffering', and 'trials') to that collective body in terms of one's position in relation to the origin (head) of water. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2009 the Uzbek newspaper *Qishloq hayoti* published a piece entitled *Between two rivers: the basins of Amu Darya and Syr Darya need to be viewed as a single whole*. The same article was reprinted by *Halq so'zi* and *Narodnoye slovo*<sup>11</sup> newspapers:

The territories within the basins of these two rivers have always been reliably provided by water. This is a single organism, at the very least because these rivers end their route falling into the Aral sea, and speaking in modern terms, historically constituted a united hydrological system of Central Asia.<sup>12</sup>

The geopolitics of water use in Central Asia are also characterised by competing needs and interests of the upstream (Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) and downstream (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) states. The saying 'Rather than being the head of a nation, be the head of water' underlines the importance of 'being at the head of the water', the position of economic, social and political power and advantage. In Central Asia, such position of potential power over the flow of water is enjoyed by the two poorest and weakest states, which have not been blessed with rich deposits of hydrocarbon resources and whose territory is primarily mountainous, and therefore lending very limited opportunities for agricultural cultivation. Water as an artefact is commonly appropriated by people as a symbol possessing powerful imagery and is often used as a 'metaphor for many aspects of human experience, including the power relations expressed in its control and management' (Strang 2004: 6). In the Uzbek press the issue of the upstream control of the flow of water is often framed through the metaphor of conflict and warfare with 'water as a weapon' being one of the more ubiquitous comparisons made.<sup>13</sup>

Historically, the downstream states have been privileged in the water distribution schemes as they have plenty of lands usable for irrigated agriculture. The post-Soviet institutional arrangements for water resources management preserved the preferential treatment of the uses of water for agriculture, thus ignoring the development needs of the upstream states, which wanted to expand the use of water for energy production as

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<sup>11</sup>*Narodnoye Slovo* is the Russian language version of the *Halq So'zi* newspaper in Uzbekistan.

<sup>12</sup> "Between two rivers: the Amu Darya and Syr Darya basins need to be viewed as a single whole", *Qishloq Hayoti*, March 3, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> "Water – weapon of political pressure", *XXI Asr*, 26 March 2008.

the 'water-for-energy' swaps that were previously regulated by the centre were impossible to uphold in the post-Soviet conditions. Thus, the upstream states see their location 'at the head of the water' as their only advantage, leverage and opportunity to overcome their dependence on the downstream states and achieve 'real' sovereignty.

## Competing meanings of water

### *Water is not a Commodity (Water as a common good)*

The reluctance of the downstream states to pay for water stems from the tradition of viewing water as a God-given common good, which creates a sense of entitlement among its users in the region. Water is not only a sacred and purifying substance (often water springs, wells and waterfalls are the sacred sites of spiritual visitations; water is used in religious rituals of purification, and is part of the process of *haram* substances transforming into *halal*<sup>14</sup>), but also is life-giving essence vital for human survival and natural cycles of death and rejuvenation. The *shari'a* law prohibits the sale of flowing water in rivers and canals as opposed to drinking water in containers (Allan 2002: 113). The arrival of water in the form of rain is seen as God's blessing and the drought as divine punishment in many cultures. In absence of water in the form of rain, the water is expected to be provided by other sovereign agents such as states (Allan 2002). This form of state sovereignty stemming from the organised provision of irrigation infrastructure and the resulting bureaucratic structures has given rise to the 'Oriental despotism' hypothesis (Wittfogel 1957).

The two doctrines that most commonly inform the appeals to international norms in discursive exchanges between Central Asian states are the doctrines of prior appropriation, which privileges the historical uses of water resources and the so called 'do no harm' doctrine (expressed in the Latin maxim '*sic utere tuo ut alienum no laedas*' meaning 'so use what is yours so as not to injure what is another's') (Polat 2002: 108). The prior appropriation doctrine can be utilised to perpetuate the existing inequality between states, which is the result of the terrain of the upstream states being

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<sup>14</sup> An Uzbek proverb "Oqar suvning haromi yo'q" [There is nothing 'forbidden' in the flowing water], for example, confirms the belief in water's purifying qualities

unfavourable to agriculture. In recent years, during the disputes regarding the water resources management, the downstream states have also referred to the international norm that asserts the 'right to water' (including for the production of food) as a fundamental human right.

For instance, the Uzbek press reporting on the Fifth Water Forum that took place in Istanbul in March 2008, quotes the president of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Miguel d'Escoto Brockman who underlined during the meeting that "those who are engaged in privatisation of water, turning it into a commodity, like oil, are depriving people of the right, as basic as the right to air we breathe" (UzA). In another instance, Uzbekistan's *Jahon* news agency<sup>15</sup> published an article entitled *Water is a common good of the whole humanity and cannot be anyone's property* in discussing the plans of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to build large dams on their sections of the region's rivers (*Jahon*, April 10, 2008). Continuing the theme, *Jamiyat* newspaper reported on a roundtable discussion at the Oliy Majlis with an article entitled "Water is not a commodity for sale" (*Jamiyat*, April 21, 2008). Finally, *Uzbekistan Today* newspaper quoted the director of the research centre of the Interstate Water Management Committee (IWMC), Viktor Dukhovniy, who commented on the necessity of an independent international assessment of the upstream hydro projects, in the article entitled *Water has always been a common good of all peoples and should remain so* (*Uzbekistan Today*, May 2, 2008).

Thus in Uzbekistan's press the notion that water could be sold is treated with ridicule, indignation and contempt as it is viewed as common sense that water is God's gift and therefore is free for everyone. The appeals to 'centuries-long history' of peaceful coexistence, common identity and shared use of water are commonly made in the articles of Uzbek press: "The Almighty did not create the rivers of Central Asia for one state only. Using water for one's mercantile interests is nothing other than betrayal of the whole Turkestani community" (*Mohiyat*, September 5, 2008).

#### *Water is a Commodity (Water as a Valuable Economic Resource)*

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<sup>15</sup>*Jahon* is the international news agency functioning under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan.

Valuing water as an economic resource is fraught with many difficulties. One of which is that only water in some parts of hydrosphere has been conceptualised as a commodity, while some waters are 'more valued than others' (Allan 2002: 111). The upstream states have been advancing the notion that water, like the natural gas and oil deposits of the downstream states, is a valuable mineral resource and an economic commodity in its own right as well as a service, the delivery of which requires constant maintenance of infrastructure and entails other costs. Speaking at the International conference *Central Asia, Russia and the EU: A Concept for the Dialogue on the Water and Energy Issues* held in Berlin (28 June 2010), Salimzoda, a scholar and a deputy of the Tajik parliament quoted the opinion of the director of the third department on the CIS countries of the MFA of Russia, Maksim Peshkov. The Russian diplomat suggested that the Central Asian states start paying for the use of water as a mechanism of efficient utilisation of the water resources in the region.

Just like oil and gas - Peshkov finds - water is also a natural wealth and a 'god's gift'. For it to be taken to the consumers, colossal material, technical, financial, human and other resources are mobilised. To maintain the infrastructure of the hydro-industry in a proper condition and to ensure the steady flow of water, concluded Peshkov, it is important to introduce procedures of monetary compensation in the issues of water use among the Central Asian states. Salimzoda concludes by saying that

until recently no one would even think that a time would come when water would become a commodity to pay for, even where there is plenty of it. Nowadays, we can often hear the ideas of turning hydro-resources into an economic unit, which should be viewed through the prism of monetary relations. Such are the conditions of the market relations and we cannot, it seems, run away from them any longer, which is evidenced by the above-mentioned positions of the authoritative experts from the EU, Russia and Central Asia (Salimzoda 2010, July 9).

Similarly, Jalol Saidzoda, a specialist of the water industry of Tajikistan on the issue of the construction of the hydro-energy plants in Tajikistan and Tajik-Uzbek relations expressed an opinion that the water from the reservoirs in Tajikistan should be paid for by the downstream countries so that the Tajik side is compensated for maintaining the infrastructure for the irrigation in neighbouring countries. He also says that water supplies during the summer season can be withdrawn in case of non-payment of the fees, just as is the case with Uzbek gas to Tajikistan.

Everyone should get used to the fact that the whole world, including the post-Soviet republics, live by the rules of the market, and that water must be paid for just like gas, electricity and other services. God gave some natural gas, oil and other riches, and to us and the Kyrgyz – water, mountains and the mineral wealth. From these premises we should engage in mutually beneficial cooperation under the conditions of the market. Water, like bread, should be the most valued goods and priced accordingly. We know from the international practice that water is also a commodity and should be paid for, as is the practice in all normal civilised countries (Anorova 2010, March 8).

In some instances Tajikistan's recent discourse regarding the use of water originating in the glaciers on its territory started to resemble the doctrine of the absolute territorial sovereignty [also known as Harmon doctrine], which 'bestows upon the upstream riparian the right to unilaterally control the flow of shared waters without a legal obligation to have regard for the interests of the downstream neighbour' (Polat 2002: 105). This is expressed in the statements of some politicians and analysts, which make a case that the Vakhsh River (a tributary of the Amu Darya) is entirely located within the territory of Tajikistan and is thus not subject to international norms regulating the use of trans boundary water resources. Such statements not only reassert Tajikistan's status as a sovereign state, but can be a significant bargaining tool as the extreme but nonetheless legitimate default position backed by the fundamental international norm of the territorial sovereignty of a state.

The notion of equitable utilisation is in conflict with the no-harm principle. It also contradicts the notion of territorial sovereignty. Allan argues that "in the rough and ready world upstreamers cleave to sovereignty and downstreamers to no-harm. Equitable distribution is not seen as a compromise position by either group" (Allan 2002: 301).

Uzbekistan has advanced the following arguments in opposition to the desirability of construction of the Roghun HPP and similarly grandiose hydro-projects in Kyrgyzstan:

1. *Historical appropriation and 'no-harm' norms/water as God-given common good/water as a human right:* as discussed above Uzbekistan has claimed the right to appropriate most of the region's water resources for irrigation due to certain norms of international law and the sense of entitlement to water stemming from metaphor of water as a god-given common good, which must be free because it is so precious



2. *Environmental and safety concerns*: Uzbekistan has objected to the project on the grounds of its questionable feasibility from the point of view of safety and environmental impact of the dam. Uzbekistan has been demanding suspension of all construction work until an independent international assessment of the project is conducted. The leadership of Uzbekistan is convinced that the Soviet assessment was not based on safety and environmental concerns but was based on economic and ideological considerations. Uzbekistan has deployed a number of 'sovereign' and discursive acts in attempting to exert pressure on Tajikistan regarding this matter.
3. *Roghun as a weapon of political control/pressure*: Uzbek authorities have expressed concern over the possibility of the upstream Tajikistan using the control of the water flow as political leverage over downstream states. Tajikistan reiterated its good will and purity of intentions in construction of the HPP many times.

#### *Demands for independent international assessment of Roghun<sup>16</sup>*

Much of the discursive encounter around the construction of Roghun has been based on the Uzbek side listing all of the potential dangers of the dam (decreased flow to downstream states and further desiccation of the Aral Sea, increased risks of seismicity

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<sup>16</sup>There have been so far two such assessments – one during the Soviet period (1965-78) and one in 2005-6 by Lehmeyer International commissioned by RusAl. Both studies have been concealed from public view as industrial or state secrets. Both studies have also been discarded by Uzbekistan as biased or not taking into consideration environmental concerns. There has been, therefore, no real public debate involving a substantial cost-benefit analysis of the project based on a balanced, well-informed and peer-reviewed study of the problem. Rationale for dams construction is often rooted in political motivations of the ruling elites, business interests of consultancy and dam-building companies and the international financial organisations such as the World Bank. Water 'expertise' only comes into the discourse when political considerations call for it. The 'technical' opinion is conspicuously absent from the Roghun discursive encounter with existing feasibility assessments (Lehmeyer) shrouded in secrecy. The feasibility and environmental impact assessments are part of the dam construction business with the firms undertaking the assessments either being directly involved in the sector or being subsidiaries of the construction and engineering firms (McCully 2001: 54-5). Lehmeyer International in particular is one of these companies which is directly involved in the dam building business and which has been previously implicated in corrupt practices. Even when the consultancies are 'independent' they have a vested interest in providing an over-optimistic reports, which over-estimate the potential benefits and under-estimate or fail to take into account the costs. The environmental impact assessment has turned into an industry which governments and dam builders have coopted as a rubber stamping mechanism for already approved projects (See McCully 2001 for a very detailed discussion of how water expertise is implicated in corrupt practices).

and possible overflowing of the reservoir; and floods downstream, a technogenic catastrophe)<sup>17</sup> and the reservoir and the Tajik side refuting all such concerns as unfounded. Uzbekistan's government has been demanding that an 'independent international assessment' of the economic, social and ecological impacts of the dam be conducted, while Tajikistan's representatives have insisted that all possible assessments have already been undertaken during the Soviet era by the Hydroproject research institute based in Tashkent as well as by Lehmeyer International Assessment in 2005-6. Tashkent dismissed the Soviet era assessment as biased and dated and the Lehmeyer International's assessment as not taking into account the environmental impact of the site.

During the 2009 forum of the International Fund to Save the Aral Sea (IFAS) held in Almaty, the Tajik and Uzbek presidents had a rather heated exchange on the causes of the disappearance of the Aral Sea and the current disagreements regarding the proper management of the water resources. On the matter of the need of an independent international assessment of Roghun HPP, Karimov said:

I am convinced and this conviction is supported by facts that not a single one of these so called 'great projects' was seriously thought-through, undergone serious expert let alone international assessment. 'Decisions of the Party – to life!' – was the slogan behind this thoughtless work, which created in our region and across the vast expanses of the former Soviet Union so many problems which to date hugely frustrate and infuriate environmentalists (Karimov 2009, April 28).

As a counter-argument for the need to conduct the assessments of the hydro projects in the upstream states, on December 17, 2009 President Rahmon proposed independent assessment of the system of water use in Central Asia and the establishment of an

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<sup>17</sup> See for example, *Pravda Vostoka*, September 4, *Narodnoe Slovo*, September 8, *Pravda Vostoka*, September 11 and *Xalq So'zi*, September 12 for discussions of the dangers of Toktogul and Roghun in the aftermath of a fatal incident and failure at the Sayano-Shushensk hydropower station in Russia. "The catastrophe that has taken place in Russia has direct implications for our region. The large scale HPPs in Central Asia – Toktogul in Kyrgyzstan and Roghun in Tajikistan – suffer from the same shortcomings as the Sayano-Shushensk cascade since they were all designed practically by the same people", quotes the article expert opinion of the secretary of the Institute of Seismology of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan in the article entitled "Criminal carelessness and irresponsibility" in the 23rd of September issue of *Pravda Vostoka*. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2010, news agency *Jahon* published an article entitled "Special attention to energy security" quoting an article from a Kyrgyz site Pravda.kg "Safety of the HPPs in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Political ambitions take priority". The failure at the Russian HPP in Sayano-Shushensk has led to speculations regarding the possibility of a similar catastrophe occurring at one of the giant HPPs of Central Asia. The article quotes expert opinion that both Roghun and Kambarata HPPs are located at the fault-lines of the major tectonic plates and are likely to be affected by powerful earthquakes (up to 10 degrees on the Richter scale).

International Fund to Save Glaciers at the International Climate Change conference in Copenhagen.

In February 2010, Uzbek Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev sent a letter to his Tajik counterpart demanding an independent examination of the possible consequences of the dam. Tajik Prime Minister, Akil Akilov, responded in an open letter saying that Vakhsh is an internal river of Tajikistan and that Tajikistan will exercise her sovereign right to manage her own water resources:

As for the water balance, it is known that the flow of the internal river of Tajikistan – Vakhsh, where the HPP is being built, is 28.6% of the average multi-year flow of Amu Darya river, and that the filling up of the reservoir will take place over fifteen years at the expense of the yearly allowance of Tajikistan, and the regulation of the flow of Vakhsh will be undertaken within the framework of the existing regional mechanisms. That is why the construction of the project will not affect the regime of flow of the water and will not pose a threat to peoples' lives. Thus, as you can see, all the issues of environment, water balance and threats of technological catastrophes, are fully taken into consideration by Tajikistan, while the erection of such objects is a sovereign right of each and every state in full compliance with the international law (*Avesta.tj* 2010, February 7).

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of February, Uzbekistan's official sister-newspapers *Xalq so'zi/Narodnoe slovo* and *Milliy tiklanish* returned to the topic. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2010, *Avesta.tj* publishes an article entitled *Akilov: the completion of the construction of the Roghun HPP is our right*. The Tajik Prime Minister is reported to say to the BBC: "Tajikistan is prepared for a dialogue with Uzbekistan on the hydro-energy issues". Akilov responded to the demands of an independent international expert assessment of the Roghun project by saying: "Our position on this issue is clear and has been expressed more than once. Should such an assessment be undertaken, it must be conducted on all hydro-power structures of the region. As for the construction of the Roghun HPP – it is our right based on the Helsinki convention of 1972". "I have offered the Uzbek side to send a competent delegation to Dushanbe so that we could discuss the matter face to face, rather than through polemics. There has been no response yet, but I am waiting".

Uzbek newspaper *Jamiyat* on April 9 published a long piece entitled *Transboundary rivers: let them not muddy the waters of wisdom and mutual understanding*. The author analyses the foreign media coverage of the problem and expresses concern over the "emotional outbursts" from the Tajik colleagues. In his words, that state expresses a desire to nationalise regional water resources.

They call the indivisible part of Amu Darya – Vakhsh – Tajikistan’s internal river and even go further calling these waters the waters of Tajik nation. This surprises not only the specialists but also the ordinary people. No one in the world has ever heard that a river can be labelled with a name of any one nation. If this goes on, we can assume that the neighbours will be next claiming the wind blowing from their side, nationalising the air, demanding money for them.

On April 15, 2010, *Avesta.tj* reported the director of the Centre for Strategic Studies of the Republic of Tajikistan Sukhrob Sharipov to have said at a press conference that the WB assessment of the Roghun HPP project should alleviate all contradictions between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. “We are convinced that the results of the expert assessment will be in Tajikistan’s favour as the project had undergone all possible assessment in the past. However, there might be some changes to the project, but they will be concerning the use of new technologies”, Sharipov said.

### *Uzbekistan quits Unified Energy System of Central Asia*

In 2009 Uzbekistan left the Central Asian electricity grid, the system inherited from the Soviet Union, which was a major blow to Tajikistan, restricting its ability to export electricity and receive fossil fuel from neighbouring republics in exchange.

All of the official newspapers (*Xalq so’zi*, *Narodnoe Slovo* and *Pravda Vostoka*) published an article entitled *Security, reliability and stability of work of the national energy systems – main priority* signed by the representative of the Uzbek Energy agency (Uzbekenergo) on 5 November. The essence of the piece is that Uzbekistan is not satisfied with the work of the Unified energy System of CA (UES CA), which “is starting to exhaust itself, is becoming a source of conflictual situations among the member-states on the issues of maintenance of sustainable work of national energy systems. Under the current conditions of work of the UES CA there is a real threat to the stable and safe functioning of energy system of Uzbekistan, which puts the possibility of the exit from this system and autonomous regime of work on the agenda”.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November *Pravda Vostoka* in the article titled *Remnant of the unitary state* (meaning ‘totalitarian Soviet state’) which criticised the work of the UES CA:

the existing UES was created in strict accordance with the logic of development of the former USSR, i.e. a unitary state, in which the former Soviet republics did not have any autonomy and

were viewed as only part of the whole territory. ... the functioning of the UES CA in the post-Soviet period was based on sheer trust, not backed by any authority or rights and the system became extremely vulnerable so that certain members could uncontrollably and with impunity engage in appropriation of energy in their own interests.

From this the author concludes that Uzbekistan's membership in the system is no longer desirable or feasible and that all further arrangements on energy exchanges in the region should take place within bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements as is the international practice.

In early December 2009 almost all media outlets published *Jahon* agency's article-response to the report of the Russian news channel *Vesti 24* reportedly prepared by Tajik TV on the exit of Uzbekistan from UES CA "which attempts to portray the event and the background of the story in a distorted fashion". The article points out that it was a 'united', not 'unified' energy system of the region and it was a legacy of the unitary soviet system. The conclusion states that "it is time that prejudiced forces behind this scenario realised that all such attempts are doomed to failure".

Continuing the commentary on Uzbekistan's exit from the UES CA, *Xalq so'zi/Narodnoe slovo* on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December published a long article entitled "Energy security: time for resolute action". The article denied that exit from the system was politically motivated, but calls Tajikistan's energy system "the main source of destabilisation of the system". The paper then reports that "Uzbek energy-suppliers are prepared to conduct negotiations with the Tajik counterparts to develop the conditions for resumption of parallel functioning of energy systems of both states".

*Pravda Vostoka*, also on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December published an article called *Wildcat trade* in which Uzbekistan's decision to withdraw from the Unified Energy System of Central Asia is discussed once again. "Neighbouring country from time to time 'helped itself' from the common pocket. However, the Tajik energy holding *Barki Tojik* argue that such facts cannot be called theft. Moreover, deputy head of the holding Aleksei Silantiev had the audacity to call Uzbekistan's decision a political measure, means to exert pressure on Tajikistan, which suffers from energy shortages during fall-winter periods. Sadly, this point of view becomes a trump card, played by the state-mongers of the neighbouring state", the author writes. "Having sown the wind, Tajik politicians are now reaping the whirlwind. It is unfortunate that they lack the courage to explain to their

people the reason the lights went out in the country and to name the real offenders who took part in the wildcat 'trade' within the network of the UES", the paper concludes.

### *'Railroad war'*

From November 2009, Uzbekistan started delaying rail road freight destined for aluminium industry and the building materials for the construction of the Roghun HPP in its territory. This started the so-called 'railroad war' between two countries. March 22 the MFA of Tajikistan presented a note of protests to the Ambassador of Uzbekistan in Dushanbe due to interruptions of railway cargos for Tajikistan across Uzbekistan. Tajikistan's prime minister Akil Akilov then complained about the situation during his visit to the UN headquarters in New York, stating that "Tashkent impedes the transit of goods to Tajikistan intentionally". Finally, the president of Tajikistan appealed to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon during the latter's official visit to Tajikistan, requesting help to resolve the conflict between the two countries (Majidov 2010, April 14).

Andrei Tropin, the representative of the state company *Tajik railroads*, claimed that "the blockade [sic] of Tajikistan started more than two months ago with the stopping of railcars with cement for the Roghun hydropower station". According to him, currently about 2,000 railcars headed for Tajikistan are stopped not only on the border but along the whole railroad of Uzbekistan. The blocked cargos include not only equipment and machinery for the construction of Roghun, but also materials for an aluminium plant, fuel, wheat and other provisions and goods.

Representatives of Tajikistan's business community made a joint statement to the international community: "Uzbekistan intentionally impedes the transit of fuels, fertilisers and other agricultural input going to Tajikistan in the run-up to the sowing season in Tajikistan, while about 70 % of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood".

The 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2010 Avesta.tj article reported: "Uzbekistan is forcibly isolating the systems of transport, air and energy communications with Tajikistan. This is happening

not entirely legally, against the existing inter-state agreements signed within the framework of the CIS and international norms. The decisions made are completely against the spirit of good neighbourly relations. For Tajikistan it is becoming rather expensive to receive railroad freight via the railroads crossing Uzbekistan. Hundreds of cars are standing at the sorting stations in Termez, Denau and Sariosiyo. The customs services of Uzbekistan delay the trains bound for Tajikistan without any good reason”.

The average delay of the freights is thirty days. Large fees are levied on each car. Parts of the goods are confiscated under the pretext of the attempts to transport over the declared amount. The businesses in Tajikistan suffer great losses as a result of diminished amounts and quality of the goods. Some goods never make it to their final destination points. For example, fire trucks destined for the fire department of the Soghd oblast, which were detained at the Uzbek border as equipment of possible dual use.

Tajik passenger trains in transit through Uzbekistan are also subject to cynical harassment. The same applies to other means of transport crossing the border with each car and truck taking up to 6 hours to make to the other side of the border post (Sultonov 2010, February 9).

On 1 April an Uzbek paper *XXI Asr* printed another in the series of articles on ‘informational warfare’ entitled *Black paint*, in which the coverage in Tajik media of the railroad blockage of the goods destined for the construction of the Roghun HPP was called ‘information attacks’, while in fact the delays in freight deliveries “were caused by the overload of freight on the railroads”. The 29 March 2010, in the *Press-uz.info* report “Legal freight is not delayed on the Uzbek border” by Toshpulat Samadov, the author condemns the ‘hysteria’ in the Tajik press regarding the delays of the Tajik freight and denies that such occurrences take place due to Uzbek government’s opposition to the construction of the HPPs in Tajikistan. The Uzbek customs officers are professional and impartial and only stop the freight that is being transported without regard for the existing rules and legal regulations of the Republic of Tajikistan.

The Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan was created in August 2008 and is a classic example of a Government-Organized Non-Governmental Organization(GONGO) set up by the Uzbek government to deal with issues of trans boundary water management by means of staging 'popular' protests and other 'grassroots' environmental initiatives. Before the parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan in 2008, the government introduced amendments to the constitutional law on elections to give the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan a quota of 15 seats in the new parliament (the total number of deputies to be elected was increased from 120 to 150 with 135 members of parliament elected in electoral districts and 15 seats allocated to the movement). The EMU has been very active in supporting the government's line on Roghun and organising protests against the pollution caused by TALCO in Surkhandarya region of Uzbekistan.

For instance, *Jamiyat* newspaper (Uzbekistan) on 26<sup>th</sup> of March of this year published two articles -- *A threat of a great disaster* and *Don't hurt nature...* – both of them discussing the concerns of the 'international community' and the domestic public in Uzbekistan over the construction of the great dams. The articles mention the protests against the harm from the chemical emissions and waste from the aluminium production at Tajikistan's TALCO plant, which was organised by the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan among the students of the Termez National University. Over the past two years *Jamiyat*, *Narodnoe slovo* and other official papers had continuous coverage of the multiple protests against TALCO organised by the EMU in Surkhandarya oblast of Uzbekistan. *Jamiyat* on 9 July 2010 printed an article with reference to the EMU "Justified demands of the Surkhandarya-dwellers". The authors write of the dissatisfaction of the population of Surkhandarya oblast by the work of the Tajik Aluminium plant which causes harm to the environment. They noted that during March there have been multiple protest rallies and over 160,000 people signed a petition to international organisations, "but the Tajik side does not pay any attention to the protests of the people planning to increase the production of aluminium".

More protests against TALCO in Surkhandarya reported by *Jamiyat* took place on 9, 12, 13 and 14<sup>th</sup> of July in various places bordering Tajikistan. *Zerkalo* newspaper continued the theme with the article called "TALCO: a live pain of Surkhandarya".



A response by an Aleksandra Jaborova was published on *CentrAsia.ru* on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2010 entitled *Tajikistan is not a source of pollution and environmental disaster*. A further response appeared on *press-uz.info* on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2010. In an article entitled *Delirium instead of a response* the author, Obidhon Mamatov, a political scientist and a lecturer at the Namangan University, asks: "Is the intension of official Dushanbe to terrorise the neighbours by means of the ill-begotten HPP behind the ignoring of the international norms of the transboundary rivers water use? "

30 March, *Avesta.tj* published *Yaxshi piket: The environmentalists live up to their president's expectations*. The article is about the anti-TALCO protests in the Surkhandarya oblast of Uzbekistan organised by the Environmentalist Movement of Uzbekistan:

... according to the decision of president Islam Karimov during the last parliamentary election campaign which took place in the end of last year the representatives of the EMU were guaranteed a quota of 15 seats. Experts opine that the main mission of the group is to put social and political pressure on Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, first and foremost, on the issue of hydro-energy and aluminium production.

Besides the protests, according to the Tajik side, Uzbekistan illegally blocks the movement of the international railroad freight across its territory. In the particular, the construction equipment for the Roghun HPP project, and the fuel and alumina for the needs of TALCO, were delayed as a result of the informal blockade, which almost led to the stop of the production cycle at the aluminium plant. The administration of TALCO insists that a modern system of purification of the waste materials is installed at the plant, and it was updated by a French company several years ago. Tajik environmental and medical specialists constantly monitor the environment and public health and note that the emissions into the air and the pollution levels in the surrounding areas do not exceed international norms.

The 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2010 issue of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst article by Erkin Ahmadov entitled "Uzbekistan's Ecological Movement Demonstrates against Tajik Aluminium Company" reported on the demonstrations in the Surkhandarya region of Uzbekistan. A response from the head of the press-service of TALCO, Sayokhat Kadyrova followed, promising that the company will conduct an evaluation in the coming summer to assess the effects on the environment the plant would have after the

completion of its modernisation that had been going on for the previous four years and cost the company about 196 million US dollars.

Many analysts commented that behind the protests is the government of Uzbekistan who are using this important source of foreign currency for Tajikistan (up to 60 percent of export revenues come from aluminium sales) to put pressure on their neighbour on the issue of its grand hydro-power projects. The head of Tajikistan's *Ecological Club* movement, Alikhon Latifi commented on the protests saying they were not genuine expressions of the Uzbek people's concern but efforts initiated by state authorities.

### **Roghun as the national idea**

For Tajik government and intellectuals, Roghun has taken on significance beyond the stated technical purpose of the project. It is seen as a 'silver bullet' solution to all economic problems of the country, but above all it is seen as an escape from the structural dependence of Tajikistan on Uzbek infrastructure and energy. History plays an important role in the perceptions of Uzbekistan as a malevolent neighbour (see Chapter Four). The project is also seen as having the potential to unite the divided people of Tajikistan under the banner of the joint heroic effort and collective sacrifice required for completion of the project. A Tajik political scientist Sattori has argued that "a real political pan-national consensus has been formed on the most important strategic issue of further development of the country. ... It seems that we have found the proverbial national idea, which is talked and written about so much in the countries of the post-Soviet space" (Sattori 2010, January 18).

Allan observes that water engineering can be part of powerful 'fantasies of a nation or community' (Allan 2002). The colonial encounters with their civilising mission were also accompanied by a 'hydraulic mission', such as Stalinist great channels and dam projects, as well Khrushchev's virgin lands campaign. Many post-colonial states also embraced large hydro-projects with great enthusiasm, seeing them as symbols of the nation's might. The completion of the dam construction thus becomes the rite of passage into adulthood of full sovereignty for 'adolescent' nations.

State sovereignty is performative, and is often manifested in spectacles of power, culture and modernity. Water engineering -- the large dams and reservoirs-- is at the heart of the most megalomaniac spectacles of the state of the past century. Giant dams had a special appeal to the Soviet state; their construction was seen as the height of modernist efficiency, the narrative of Man conquering and mastering Nature for his own benefit. Feaux de la Croix, who studied old and new dams in Kyrgyzstan, notes that dams were viewed with almost religious reverence during the Soviet time: "Because dams are symbols of such great effort and investment, they can be described as 'sacred' (set apart, revered) objects. ... In the Socialist era, labour was a quasi-sacred activity that created celebrated artefacts" (Feaux de la Croix 2010: 7).

Large dams are monumental and quasi-sacred spectacles of the state, 'temples' or 'shrines' to modernity and nation-state (Baviskar 2007, McCully 2001). Pushed to raise the money necessary for completion of the project, the Tajik government launched a 'voluntary-compulsory' campaign of the sale of Roghun shares to the population. President Emomali Rahmon asked 'every son of the nation, every patriot and our countrymen abroad to support Tajikistan', to show moral and financial support to the project and purchase a share in the Roghun Hydropower Project. The purchase of shares was declared the duty of each citizen and 'good Muslim'. "It is our national goal to accomplish this important project", said Rahmon in a televised address, "It will be not only our main source of light and power, but also our national pride and the bulwarks of our statehood" (*UPI Energy* 2010, April 27). "Roghun is our all – motherland, faith, future, unity", President Rahmon addressed the population calling on them to support the construction of the Roghun HPP. According to him, such support would be 'holy and noble'. As the President of the International Forum of Tajiks, he also called on all the Tajiks in the world to contribute to the drive for the construction of this 'palace of light':

By building Roghun we secure the today and the tomorrow of Tajikistan. Roghun is the great leap forward in the industry and economy of the state; it means warmth and heat in every Tajik household; it means dignified standards of living and social welfare of each Tajik citizen. Support for Roghun is the duty of every Muslim of Tajikistan. We should all come together, tighten our belts and overcome the hardship. I wish us perseverance in this difficult but sacred undertaking,

The state apparatus applied all of its coercive mechanisms to make people buy the shares. Portions of public service workers' salaries, state-funded students' stipends and other payments from the state to citizens were withheld as part of a 'voluntary' popular

effort. Moreover, pressure was exerted on all major tax-paying private companies to purchase Roghun shares. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of December 2009, *Avesta.tj* reported that “Dushanbe-dwellers will celebrate the Day of Unity in Construction of Roghun on January 6”. In February, the national energy company, *Barki Tojik* conducted a major campaign among its employees, 12,000 of whom were compelled to purchase shares worth 29 million somoni. In March 2010, before the celebration of the International Women’s Day (renamed ‘Mothers’ Day’) and Navro’z (Central Asian New Year), the city administration of Dushanbe announced that women-activists will be rewarded with Roghun shares. People’s deputies of the capital’s Majlis decided to spend 10 million somoni from the city’s budget to purchase shares in the Roghun HPP. They also declared the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 2010 the Day of Unity in Construction of Roghun. The government also declared an amnesty on money invested in Roghun (CACBW 2010, March 2).

Five million shares and certificates have been issued for a total sum of six billion somoni (about \$1.3 billion), which is the estimated cost to complete the project.<sup>18</sup> Each family was ‘asked’ to buy at least 3,000 somoni (\$690) worth of shares, though the poorest families were exempted. By the end of January 2010 nearly 701 million somonis (\$162 million) had been collected and by March the number reached 770 million somonis (\$178 million) (Leon 2010). However, there is still a problem of converting the money raised from sale to the population into hard currency (Samiev 2010, January 8).<sup>19</sup>

However, there have been voices of scepticism regarding Tajikistan’s new found national idea emerging from the neighbouring republic. Uzbekistan’s *Ishonch* newspaper on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March printed an article called “Another idea, but is it the

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<sup>18</sup> The estimated project costs range between USD 1.3 billion to 6 billion. Moreover, the large dam projects are notorious for cost and construction time overruns and, given Uzbek opposition to the project and the transport blockade of the past year, there is all likelihood of Roghun construction dragging on for at least another decade.

<sup>19</sup> Rustam Samiev argues that the only optimal and possible way to convert the money earned by the sale of shares of the Roghun HPP from somoni into the US dollars or Euros is to the currency from the sale of the Tajik aluminium and the government were planning to use this mechanism from the very beginning, says the independent political scientist Rustam Samiev. “However, the currency that TALCO brings into the economy of Tajikistan (about 30-40 m USD) is insufficient to convert all the ‘Roghun monies’, which now already comprise 300 m USD for 2010. The Tajik state would need to tap into the currency reserves held at the off-shore accounts, including those of the “Oriyonbank” in Dushanbe”. According to the expert’s estimates, over the ‘post-Ansol’ period the off-shore accounts of TALCO should have accumulated up to USD 1.5 billion, which is sufficient for conversion of all the money made from the sale of the Roghun shares (*Avesta.tj*, 8 January 2010).

national idea?” about the campaign in Tajikistan to raise money for the construction of the Roghun HPP through sale of shares to the population, whereby people are deprived of their salaries, pensions and student stipends. “Is the ‘unifying’ national idea of the Tajik people really to be found in the protests of pensioners, quiet angst of the business people, despair of students and unpromising futures of teacher and doctors, who are to receive the major part of their salaries in shares of the Roghun HPP? We do think that such ‘beating out’ of money can unite the people, the majority of whom live below the poverty line?” questions the journalist rhetorically.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of May, *XXI Asr* paper turned its attention to the current issue of Roghun HPP in Tajikistan in the article “One hundred somoni for Roghun”, which reports that a group of illegal migrant workers from Tajikistan was arrested in the Dzhizzak oblast of Uzbekistan. The arrested told of the hardships they suffer back at home. The author quotes the words of the Tajiks about joblessness and the demands of the government from each family to pay a hundred somoni for the construction of the Roghun HPP, forcing people to work at the construction without paying them.

### *Historical references*

History is brought up continuously in this discursive encounter. It is commonly referred to, mentioning the inequitable delimitation of the republics’ boundaries, whereby Tajikistan only got the mountains, unusable for agriculture. Tajik analysts also suspect that Uzbekistan is trying to prevent real sovereignty and independence of the former quasi-colonial subject: referring to the period between 1924 and 1929 when the Tajik ASSR was a part of the Uzbek SSR (see chapters three and four for more background on this). In one article the author writes:

...the leadership of that country [Uzbekistan -MS], striving for regional domination does not want Tajikistan to be rid of its influence, to gain economic strength and acquired greater (in all respects) independence. It seems sometimes Tashkent forgets that Tajikistan has ceased to be Uzbekistan’s autonomy in 1929. All of the recent actions of Uzbekistan against Tajikistan ... are all aimed at preventing the economic development of Tajikistan.... Uzbekistan prefers the political advantage of keeping Tajikistan dependent despite the costs to its own and its neighbours’ economy. And the Roghun HPP is the perfect excuse to prevent the economic development of the neighbour. If it weren’t for Roghun, they would have found another reason. In other words, it is neither environment, nor other earthly issues that concern Uzbekistan. Simply some cannot make peace with the growth of prosperity of the close neighbour (Kosimov 2010, April 2).

Another commentator in Tajikistan takes the historical reference further back in time:

This is quite simply jealousy that the neighbours are becoming more independent in matters of transport and energy and that they will have to pay for water and equal cooperation. The peoples of Central Asia in their politics are returning to the medieval practices whereby the aliens, including the Mongol barbarians under the leadership of Genghis Khan turned Central Asia into ruins, and his follower, also of the Mongol Barlas tribe – Tamerlane turned not only this region but many other countries and peoples into a real hell. The barbarians left, but the peoples of Central Asia, including its indigenous people, the Tajiks, stayed. And thus it will always be. Does history teach us nothing? The policy of economic blockade of Tajikistan which has been going on for seventeen years now and other unfriendly actions from the Uzbek side confirm that history teaches the Uzbek authorities nothing (Anorova 2010, March 8).

Another example of the same type of commentary is an article by Bahriddin Sultonov:

The demarches of Uzbekistan have their historical roots. Since the 1920s, when Tajikistan was granted the status of a union republic, the official Tashkent is manifesting a jealous attitude to all positive changes in the neighbouring republic. Tashkent, as much as it did in 1924, wants to see Tajikistan as an autonomous subject within Uzbekistan. They want to preserve the ability to influence the processes in Tajikistan as was the case during the Soviet Union. History has proved that the Uzbek party nomenclature threw Nasratullo Mahsum, who spoke of the importance of Tajik language, into the jaws of the Stalinist repressions. The diseased Rahmon Nabiev on the eve of the civil war spoke of the construction of the Roghun HPP and his presidency tragically ended. With the spin of the Uzbek authorities, he has been portrayed as a drunk, a debaucher, a soft and indecisive man. The kind of insinuations and lies distributed about the current president, Emomali Rahmon, are evident on many Internet pages, behind which, without doubt, there is Tashkent's hand. Uzbekistan must understand that the path to strengthening Tajikistan's independence is irreversible. The times and conditions have substantially changed and the actions and pressure from the position of the 'big brother' do not cut it anymore" (Sultonov 2010, February 9).

Finally, on December 10, 2009 Tajik president Emomali Rahmon was reported (unconfirmed) to have said at a press conference with Tajik journalists that Roghun is a "matter of life and death" for Tajikistan, but that Uzbekistan and the Uzbek president Karimov personally are "fighting against all things Tajik... not wanting the development of our country, they close the highways and railroads, turn off electricity during cold winters" (Dubnov 2009, December 10). The issue of the construction of Roghun is therefore woven into the narrative of the continuing struggle for Tajik sovereignty and independence from the scheming neighbour who aims to undermine Tajik statehood.

## **Conclusion**

The 'discursive encounter' over geopolitics of water use in Central Asia is central to the construction of state sovereignties through its territorial, security and identity aspects.

The controversy surrounding the intention of the Tajik government to complete the construction of the Roghun HPP illustrates how sovereignty is constructed through the interplay between these three aspects of sovereignty discourse. This is established through the central metaphor of 'state as a person' and the accompanying metaphors of water, which are vital for articulation of identity, territoriality and security through the use of 'body and soul' tropes.

The Roghun discursive encounter demonstrates how dialogic interactions are vital in constructions of identity. This chapter has demonstrated how various discursive strategies, speech acts and performances are deployed in order to achieve the goals of interaction, which go beyond the ascertainment of the truth-value of claims and counter-claims within a dialogic encounter. There are also obvious silences and hidden scripts behind the official open discourse. The plight of the displacement of large communities and the fact that Roghun construction is likely to enrich a small group of elite rather than the entire nation are concealed from the public discourse. These silences are significant and 'speak volumes'.

## Chapter Six

# Conclusions

This concluding chapter looks back onto the thesis and presents its main findings as well as draws out the implications for the wider field of Central Asian studies and International Relations. First, it summarises the arguments presented in the previous chapters. Findings regarding the dialogic narrative construction of sovereignty through discourses of historiography and practice of geopolitics are presented. Second, the chapter discusses what has been achieved by this research project and what contributions have been made. I then evaluate the advantages and limitations of 'discursive encounter' as a method of discourse analysis. Finally, the chapter suggests the future lines of enquiry into the matters of state-creation and maintenance in post-Soviet Central Asia in particular and more broadly in post-colonial contexts.

Two defining periods of state-creation in Central Asia are analysed as periods of a complex struggle to define the terms of the state of exception. The on-going case of Roghun controversy is then placed within the broader context of global and regional politics during the first decade of the twenty first century. The states and zones of exception created by the United States' 'War on Terror' and the increased securitisation of politics in Central Asia (Colour revolutions, Great game, and Islamic Extremism threats) have created the conditions for institutionalisation of emergency politics.

### ***1. Dissertation summary***

The theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 traces the historical emergence of the concept of sovereignty in general and theorisation of post-colonial and post-Soviet sovereignties in particular. It is argued that the discussions of the nature of sovereignty in the post-colonial conditions in many respects mirror the debates on the



characteristics of post-colonial nationalisms. Both are premised on a series of juxtapositions between organic, naturally 'evolved' model of the Westphalian nation-state to the artificiality of post-colonial 'quasi' state-nation. The post-colonial and post-Soviet sovereignties are thus conceptualised as found within the zone of permanent state of exception from the international 'norm' of sovereignty. Sovereignty then was defined as a paradoxical concept, composed of a chain of signifiers which collapse territoriality, ethnicity, nationality, popular sovereignty and governmentality techniques into a single whole with a built-in, yet tacit, claim to an ultimate transcendental signified. Sovereignty therefore is not found in any one or a combination of its purportedly objectively existing manifestations. Rather, it is found within the dialogic process of asserting sovereignty and its recognition or contestation, thus creating the alibi for the sovereign subjects, the realms of 'domestic' and 'international'.

I offer a metaphor for sovereignty based on the topological shape of a Möbius strip, a paradoxical one-sided surface with only one boundary folding in on itself. The various alibis for sovereignty keep deferring revealing the ultimate signified behind the chain of signifiers.

The chapter further discusses ontological and epistemological assumptions of the dissertation through the discussion of the methodology of the enquiry that has led to its production. The method of discourse analysis is discussed in brief. This dissertation uses a combination of various discourse analytic tools. The central philosophy of the enquiry is to explore relations between two states through their interaction rather than a one-sided process of representation of a self in relation and opposition to another. The method used in this thesis is a dialogic approach of analysing 'discursive encounters' between actors speaking on behalf of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. As part of the process of discursive encounter analysis (DEA) such methods as metaphor, narrative and predicate analysis, as well as dialogical analysis are utilised.

The rationale behind the choice of the combination of these methods is that any identity construction is found in the social dialogic process of negotiation and sanctions of the competing narratives of the self, which heavily depend on reception and acceptance by

the 'audience'. The construction of the self depends on the successful use of discursive strategies which allow the speaker to advance a desired identity for themselves and resist the negative/undesired constructions offered by others. This explains why the same events are talked of differently by different actors, and also why the same actors may choose to narrate the same events differently in different contexts. The DEA, as a method, adds value to the discourse analytic approaches by presenting a more dynamic picture of identity articulation, vividly illustrating the process of alteration of framing, argumentation, predication and even referential practices as the end-point of the continuing narrative of the self is adjusted to take into account the most recent political power reconfigurations, turning events and shifts in dominant paradigms. This is a pains-taking approach which might require linguistic proficiency in more than one foreign language and close familiarity with case studies in question, but it offers a means to account for discursive shifts that can in turn be correlated to the broader political contexts.

The methodology appendix section offers a 'narrative' of the research process by disclosing the sources, fieldwork encounters of the author and why the particular case studies were chosen. The transparency of the research process in International Relations is advocated. The use of auto-ethnography as a means of honest and self-aware authoring is suggested as a potentially productive way for understanding how the International Relations scholarship has been constructed through a combination of institutional arrangements, norms and expectations and the unique experiences of each researcher.

The third chapter provides a narrative of the emergence of the Tajik and Uzbek SSRs as national homelands for people defined as 'Tajiks' and 'Uzbeks' within the Soviet Union's federative structure. Far from a comprehensive account of the region's history, this chapter offered a brief overview of the diverse, hybrid and ambiguous identities from tsarist Russia's colonisation of the region till the emergence of independent states of Central Asia in 1991. The complex intertwining of history of Persian and Turkic speaking peoples in the region, the imperial encounter and the Soviet state and nation-making endeavour of the Marxist 'civilising mission'; provide the context for all post-independence interactions between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The Tajik and Uzbek states emerged out of the complex discursive encounter between the various groups claiming to represent and speak on behalf of the indigenous peoples of the region. The contemporary debates can in large part be traced to that first defining period of state-creation between 1924 and 1929. The ambition of the chapter is not to provide a comprehensive version of history of the region and the peoples populating it, but to explore the ambiguity, hybridity and multiplicity of identities behind the labels of Tajik and Uzbek. The goal here is to problematise the facile labels justifying the existence of titular states containing eponymous peoples defined in terms of ethnicity. It is the ambiguity of where the 'Tajik' identity ends and 'Uzbek' one begins that is behind the discursive encounters discussed chapters four and five. In the Möbius strip of identity/difference to be Uzbek means not to be Tajik and vice versa, but there is no ultimate signified on the other side of the ribbon, as there is no other side.

The fourth chapter presents the first case study, the discursive encounter around historical narratives produced by actors speaking on behalf of the nation and state in post-Soviet Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Historiography is examined as the medium for articulation of a narrative of statehood. The post-Soviet state-creation is rationalised through the repertoires of 'ethno-genesis' and 'historiography of statehood' based on the projection of modern conceptions of identity onto the past. This process is akin to 'biographical narratives' by means of which people construct a coherent and continuous sense of self. Once again, the metaphor of the state as a person becomes apparent in the discursive practices that give both the land and the people a quasi-organic corporeality, whereby both the nation/state is imagined as a living breathing organism, but also people, statures and collectivities come to embody the state.

Various texts, including history textbooks, official speeches, monuments and internet fora are analysed within dialogical framework to see how competing narratives are advanced by various actors to make statements about the racial supremacy and cultural superiority, make territorial claims and to justify the very right to existence of the current nation-states. Numerous repertoires and discursive dialogic strategies are utilised to assert one's claim to sovereignty in its territorial, existential and moral incarnations.

We find, therefore, that the narrative of Tajik history deeply depends on the Uzbek other for the construction of the self and vice versa. The two narratives are in constant dialogue and the process of negotiation whereby each actor's goal is to present an optimal representation of their social self to the interlocutor and other possible audiences, to justify one's actions, and to resist negative representations of the self by the others. While Tajikistan's history is a narrative of an imagined ethnic/racial community, Uzbekistan's historical narrative is based on the attachment to a particular territory, land, encircled by the boundaries created in the 1920-30s delimitation of the Soviet Socialist republics. These two radical narratives of the same events, peoples and territories illustrate differing sources of sovereignty in the two states, irreconcilable on the current terms of discourse, yet fundamentally interdependent. The current and future relations of these two states are fundamentally shaped by the stories that are told about their pasts.

These historical narratives are also the underlying basis for the articulation of the post-Soviet 'national ideologies'. In Uzbekistan this takes the form of the Ideology of State Independence/Sovereignty [*Milliy istiqlol mafkurasī*]. In Tajikistan the ideas of 'Unity' [*vahdat*] and 'Peace' [*tinji*] are closely intertwined in the post-civil war political context as the central 'national idea' for the Tajik state. History is seen as the source of self-knowledge, the loss of memory of which would lead to the dissolution of national identity as expressed in the warning of the threat of *mankurtisation*. Knowing one's true self [*hudshinosi/o'zlikni anglash*], according to Central Asian politicians and intelligentsia, provides protection from the foreign attempts to enslave and strip one of their humanity. The only way for the 'true self', defined in ethno-national terms, to survive within this historical narrative is to have a 'strong centralised state' led by an authoritative paternalistic figure. The form of a sovereign independent authoritarian state thus became a normative construct advanced in the post-Soviet countries, including Central Asian states of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

In the fifth chapter our attention shifts from the temporal (narrative identity over time) to spatial (geopolitics of water use) articulation of sovereignty in Tajik-Uzbek dialogic interactions. The chapter focuses on the on-going controversy between the Tajik and the Uzbek governments and expert communities over the plans of the Tajik government to resume the construction of the Roghun hydropower project on the Vakhsh River,

which the Uzbek government has been vehemently objecting to. This case study examines concrete dialogic strategies and moves that each side's actors take to assert their sovereignty.

Despite it being called 'discursive encounter analysis', there is an important aspect of interaction implied in the concept of 'dialogic' identity construction. Both sides engage in a series of dialogic moves constrained by their overall purpose and general context within that interaction occurs as well as previous and anticipated moves and reactions of their interlocutor and other audiences. The dialogic moves are accompanied by what I call 'sovereign acts' – moves aimed at asserting sovereignty. Protests against the construction of the dam, the mobilisation of resources through the Roghun shares sale, stopping of the railroad traffic of the goods destined for the Roghun and TALCO, exchange of diplomatic notes of protests and refusal to attend regional leaders' forum – are all examples of such 'sovereign acts'. They are indeed 'performances' of sovereignty.

All these dialogic interactions ultimately pursue three strategic goals. First, they aim to advance a positive representation of self and negative portrayal of the other. Second, they want to resist the negative portrayal of the self by the other. Finally, they attempt to influence the opinions of relevant onlookers/audiences, to add to their prestige and establish favourable relations of power. These interactions, moreover, take place within the broader context of geopolitical imagining of the region from both within and outside.

The final section of this concluding chapter examines how the broader global context may be used to account for the predominance of geopolitical thinking in foreign policy formulation, implementation and interpretation in Central Asia. Since the Roghun controversy is an on-going case, the directions for further research are suggested.

## ***2. Dialogic narratives of self and other: identity, historiography and geopolitics***

Chapters 4 and 5, discussing the dialogic articulation of sovereignty, sought to demonstrate how the practice of international relations in post-Soviet Central Asia constitutes the personhood of the states as entities with a continued existence through different historical periods and imagined as part of certain geopolitical configurations that have significance for statehood. I attempted to demonstrate the mechanism by which the imagining and assertion of post-Soviet identity, statehood and sovereignty takes place. For this I have applied a linguistically-inspired approach of analysis of political discourse as a dialogue between the self and the significant others. The narrative-creation has thus been analysed as a dialogic and interactive process.

Creation of narrative meaning is a mental process that helps people to combine disparate episodes, events and actions into meaningful and coherent stories thus making sense of the world around them and helping one understand his or her place in the narrative and therefore in the world as well. Not only does narrative construction have this sense-making function but it also serves as the subject-constituting cognitive mechanism. In order to be part of a story, one has to have a coherent and continuous identity which is more or less constant. Thus 'biographical narratives' on an individual level help construct one's life story as that of a coherent subject; collective narratives (or myths) have a function of sustaining shared beliefs and upholding communal values and thus are important for societal cohesion. There are six main cognitive mechanisms by means of which the human mind assimilates the elements of awareness of the material world around us and assembles those elements into meaningful schemata and narratives (Polkinghorne 1986: 4). I add to that model the element of dialogicality to enrich our understanding of the construction as a social phenomenon rather than a work of a lone mind or a group-think of all-powerful elites. The mechanism of dialogic sovereignty formation therefore would consist of the following stages:

1. Identity and alterity

- a. Constructive – strategies that are aimed at constructing (national) identities (referential/nomination, predication);
- b. Preservative/ justificatory – strategies that are used to preserve or reproduce (national) identities (argumentation);
- c. Transformative – strategies that seek to change (national) identities (mitigation, intensification, connotation, synonymisation, redefinition)

- d. Destructive – discursive strategies that aim to dismantle (national) identities (deconstruction, denial, censorship, ban, silence)
- 2. Similarity and dissimilarity (tropes and metaphors, and the types of metaphors such as simile, synecdoche, allegory, and metonymy)
- 3. Categorisation and classification (order)
- 4. Representation (signs, symbols, icons or indexes)
- 5. Example (one is an instance of another)
- 6. Causation (narrative)

First, the various elements of awareness are perceived as either the same or not the same as others (identity and alterity). Secondly, things are perceived as either similar or dissimilar to other things and this relationship is expressed in language as tropes and metaphors (and the types of metaphors such as simile, synecdoche, allegory, and metonymy). Thirdly, some elements are understood as constituting a part of other elements thus helping us understand the relationship between the whole and its composite parts and categorise and catalogue things into an orderly universe. Fourth, we understand that some things stand for others as signs, symbols, icons or indexes. Fifth, some elements of the perceived reality are an instance of another. And finally, and most importantly, one element can be understood as causing another thus connecting two episodes in a meaningful way.

Construction of in-groups and out-groups by means of articulation of identity/sameness and difference (cultural, ideological or that based on ‘objective’ interests) is the basis of politics. In the cases examined in this dissertation, the boundary between identity and difference is not always obvious and needs to be articulated through discursive strategies and practices that name the in-group and out-group, assign them qualities through clear and implicit predication and the narratives of self and other that emphasize either commonalities or differences between the groups. It is shown that the ‘other’ is constructed as either very similar to the self (brethren peoples) or radically different (ethnic animosity), depending on the speaker and the circumstances of utterances. To make such switch from difference to similarity possible there must exist a spectrum of meaning along which the signs of identity and alterity can be placed. This spectrum consists of clusters of synonymously used terms and their connotations. For instance, ‘Tajik’ is used synonymously with ‘Persian’ and ‘Iranian’, which have a number

of historical and cultural connotations. These connotations in turn overlap with those that correspond to the signifier 'Uzbek' and its synonyms, such as 'sedentary', 'Muslim', and so on. The designation 'Sart' used to occupy this space of subtle differences, hybridity, ambiguity and undecidability on the spectrum of identity and difference between Tajik and Uzbek. After the delimitation, this designation was removed and the gap between commonalities and differences was filled with the common membership in the imagined community of the 'Soviet people' and the 'proletariat'. In the absence of those signifiers, it can be filled contextually with various signifiers indicating religion, locality, economic interests, and political views. This space in between can be shrunk and expanded depending on the political context.

The total erasure of the difference, however, is seen as an existential threat by more radical groups of intellectuals. Rahim Masov's thesis of the constant struggle of the Tajik people against territorial dislocation from ancestral homeland and cultural and racial assimilation is the expression of this ontological anxiety on the part of some influential elites in Tajikistan. Uzbek conception of self-identity is more 'elastic' and ready to subsume a diversity of past and present identities under the label of 'Uzbek'. The tables below demonstrate the extremes of the discursive construction of self as 'Tajik' and 'Uzbek' and not the whole spectrum of alterity and identity that I have just discussed. They represent the ideal-type constructions in the official discourse, but are not static and dogmatic as the rigid structure of a table suggests. Therefore, an identity or the 'self' is a dynamic dialogical process rather than a static 'thing'. The 'self' depends on the configuring of past events into a historical narrative which imparts onto an 'imagined community' a unity and continuity. Such narratives not only allow for the making of sense of the present state of affairs by looking at the past but also by anticipating the future. The ideologies of state in Central Asia therefore are reliant on historical narratives in order not only to justify their post-Soviet existence but also to imagine the future and to substitute the domestic politics with the normative narrative of state-idea arising from such historical narratives.

All elements in a narrative are evaluated according to their contribution to the final resolution of the story, or its 'point'. A well-articulated narrative would normally establish (1) a valued end point, (2) events relevant to the end point, (3) a certain order in which events occurred chronologically, and, most importantly, (5) causal links



between those events. Negative or positive evaluation of the meaning of a narrative is based on the degree to which the hero(es) progress toward the desired valued end point of the narrative such as happiness, wealth, or the fulfilment of prophesy. In nationalist discourse, such a desired end point of historical narrative is the creation of an independent state the boundaries of which would contain the national 'homeland' territory, thus containing the all the people with the same 'identity' within a single body politic. Oftentimes narratives can be retrospectively rearranged, their respective elements re-evaluated in the light of the eventual outcome of the story. Once the final outcome is known, all elements are connected retrospectively within a plot highlighting each individual element's contribution to the development and resolution of the story and the achievement of the final outcome of the story. In nationalist discourse there is never a complete end to the story as the protagonists are seen to continue their existence in 'the people', the narrative can always be updated and re-evaluated if new facts and interpretations of the past events are introduced into the evaluation.

In the case of a national identity the narrative can progress in a number of ways, the four basic plots being comedy, tragedy, heroic saga and the 'happily-ever-after' (Gergen 2009: 38-40). In each narrative trajectory the final outcome is judged based on the final point of the story. If the perceived desired or inevitable endpoint of the narrative is understood to be the achievement of independent statehood and sovereignty within a national homeland as defined by the representative of a nation, then the progression of the historical events would be evaluated by whether or not that ultimate point was reached. In the tragic scenario the protagonist (Tajik people) first fail to recognise and express their desire to be recognised as a separate nation striving for territorial statehood, their very existence as a people is denied by their arch-nemesis (Uzbeks, pan-Turkists). Although Tajiks do achieve recognition of their national rights first within the Uzbek SSR and then as a separate union republic, their true potential for national territorial self-determination is forever

**Table 6.1. Discursive self- and other-construction (Tajik → Uzbek& Uzbek→Tajik)**

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Devices</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>Other</b>
<i>Referential /Nomination</i>	Construction of in-groups and out-groups	Membership categorization; biological, naturalizing and depersonalizing; metaphors and metonymies; synecdoche (pars pro toto, totum pro pars)	Tojik/Tajik Fors/Persian Iran Aryan/Indo-European Aboriginal Upstream	Uzbek /'Uzbek' Turkic Turan Mongoloid Invader Downstream
<i>Predication</i>	Labeling social actors more or less positively or negatively, deprecatorily or appreciatively	Stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits; Implicit and explicit predicates	Civilized Settled Cultured Peace-loving and gentle Poor (impoverished by other's conquest) Handsome	Uncivilized Nomadic Uncultured Violent and cruel Rich (enriched from looting of the indigenes' property) Ugly
<i>Argumentation</i>	Justification of positive or negative attributions	Topoi used to justify political inclusion or exclusion, discrimination or preferential treatment	Physical appearance, blood, kinship, body metaphors, emotive connection to the land, perception of historical injustice to self, language	
<i>Perspectivation, framing or discourse representation</i>	Expressing involvement; Positioning speaker's point of view	Reporting, description, narration or quotation of events and utterances	Almost all actions of the other in relation to self are explained through timeless narrative of persecution and existential threat.	
<i>Intensification, mitigation</i>	Modifying the epistemic status of a proposition	Intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force of utterances	Mitigation of 'ethnic animosity' narrative by 'brethren peoples' discourse, whereby the good 'common [Uzbek] people' are delinked from the government.	

Strategy	Objectives	Devices	Self	Other
<i>Referential /Nomination</i>	Construction of in-groups and out-groups	Membership categorization; biological, naturalizing and depersonalizing; metaphors and metonymies; synecdoche (pars pro toto, totum pro pars)	Uzbek (O'zbekim, o'zbekchilik) Heir to great civilizations of the past (Afrosiyob, Orhun, Temurids, Jadids)	Tojik/Tajik Mountain people (Galcha)
<i>Predication</i>	Labeling social actors more or less positively or negatively, deprecatorily or appreciatively	Stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits; Implicit and explicit predicates	Peace- and freedom-loving, Always fought for independent statehood  Adhering to proper moderate Islam in accordance with O'zbekchilik  Government is one with people, wise and patriarchal	War-like and not capable of self-government after independence (absence of a strong leader)  Religious fundamentalists (Wahabbis)  Government is weak, corrupt and makes unwise decisions that harm 'common people'
<i>Argumentation</i>	Justification of positive or negative attributions	Topoi used to justify political inclusion or exclusion, discrimination or preferential treatment	Kinship metaphors (great ancestors, 'our grandfathers'), past shared suffering (wounded body and anguish metaphor), exile and loss of memory and therefore sense of self ( <i>mankurtism</i> ).	'Discourses of danger'  Other is represented as a source of danger and physical, environmental, ideological and moral pollution and harm
<i>Intensification, mitigation</i>	Modifying the epistemic status of a proposition	Intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force of utterances	Eternal friendship ('One people speaking two different languages'). Differentiation between Tajik government and people, whereas the Uzbek people and the government are represented as speaking in one voice.	

thwarted by the decision of the Soviet authorities to give the 'ancestral' cultural centres of Bukhara and Samarkand to Uzbekistan (Tragedy).

The 'happily-ever-after' plot presents a story of a consistent progress towards the desired end. In a comedic plot the protagonists find themselves in difficult conditions initially, but having suffered, they succeed in achieving their desired goal. Thus, for instance, the official Uzbek historiographic narrative of the centuries-long struggle of primordial Uzbek people towards achievement of independence can only be convincing tentatively and only if articulated in the most general and ambiguous terms. As long as the shifting identities, boundaries and principles of formation behind various state-structures remain subsumed under the label of 'history of the peoples of the territory of Uzbekistan' a link can be established that teleologically brings together the disparate elements into a single narrative of struggle for sovereign statehood and its ultimate culmination after acquisition of independence in 1991. Moreover, the circumstances of becoming independent need to be concealed within this heroic discourse as well as demonstrated in the discussion of the interpretation of the March 1991 referendum results in Uzbekistan.

The most convincing and appealing version of the nationalist narrative is the 'heroic saga', whereby the protagonist(s) start off being happy (past instances of glorious statehood such as the Samanid or Temurid state, or past civilisational achievements of Aryans, or other ancient peoples that populated the region) but then encounter a tragic turn of events reversing their luck (inclusion in the Russian empire and the USSR) until they achieve a happy resolution of the story (independence), which is threatened again (by a civil war or terrorist threat). The heroes are required to go through many trials. In fact, in a heroic saga, the trials may never end, since the protagonists may be called upon at any time to perform more heroic deeds in the never-ending struggle between the good and the evil.

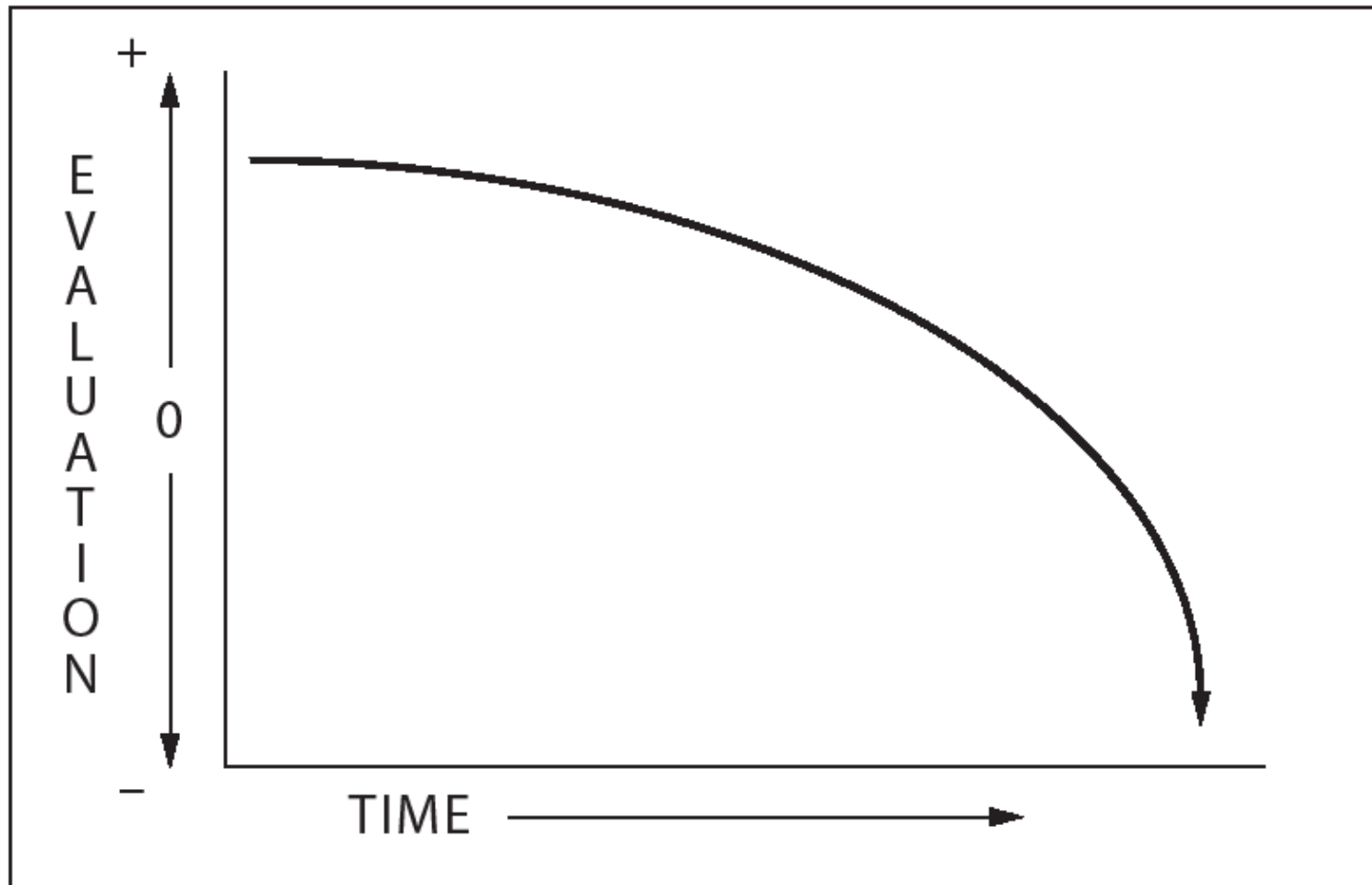


Figure 6.1.Tragedy. Source: Gergen 2009: 40.

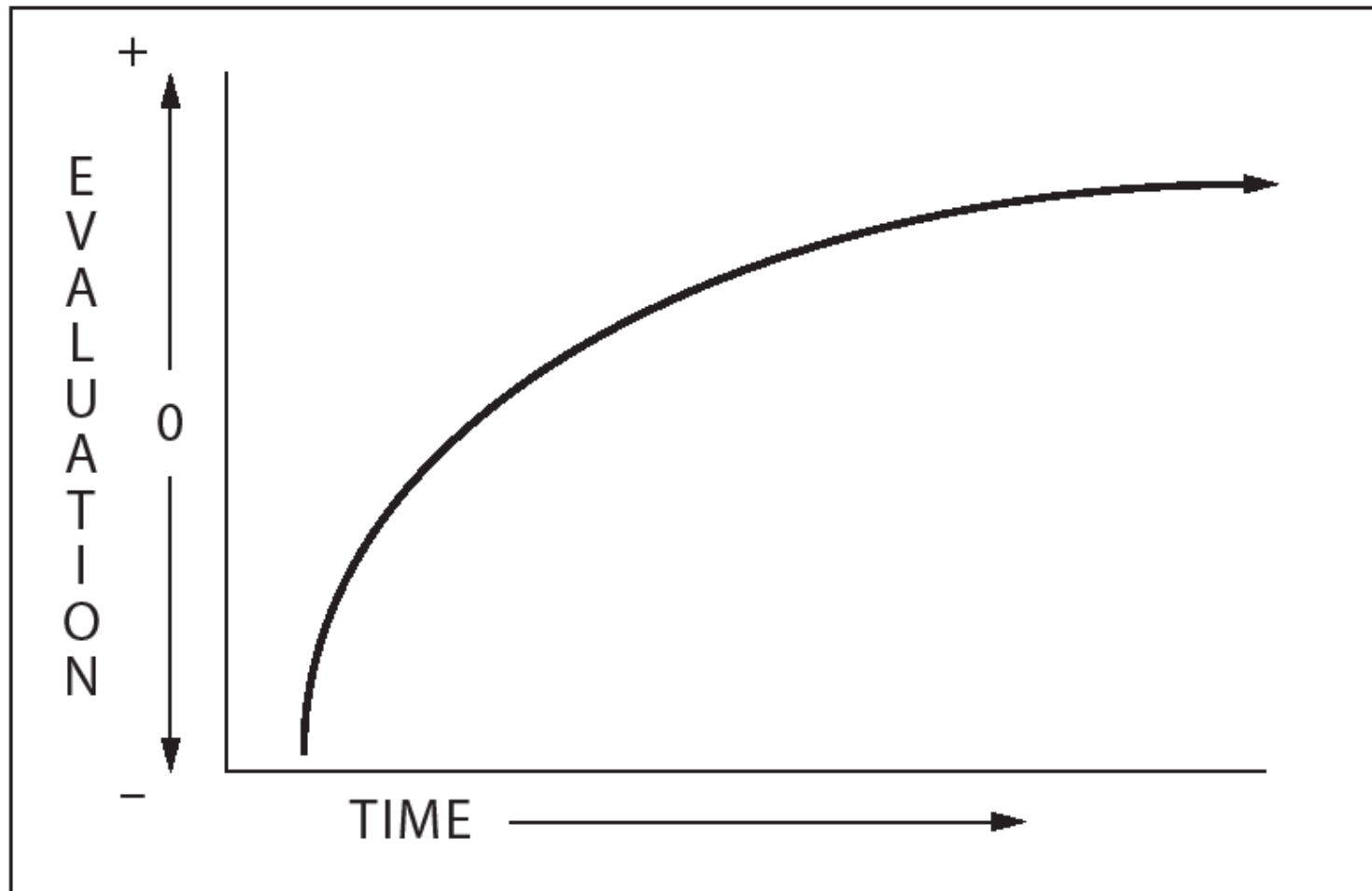


Figure 6.2. Happily ever after. Source: Gergen 2009: 40.

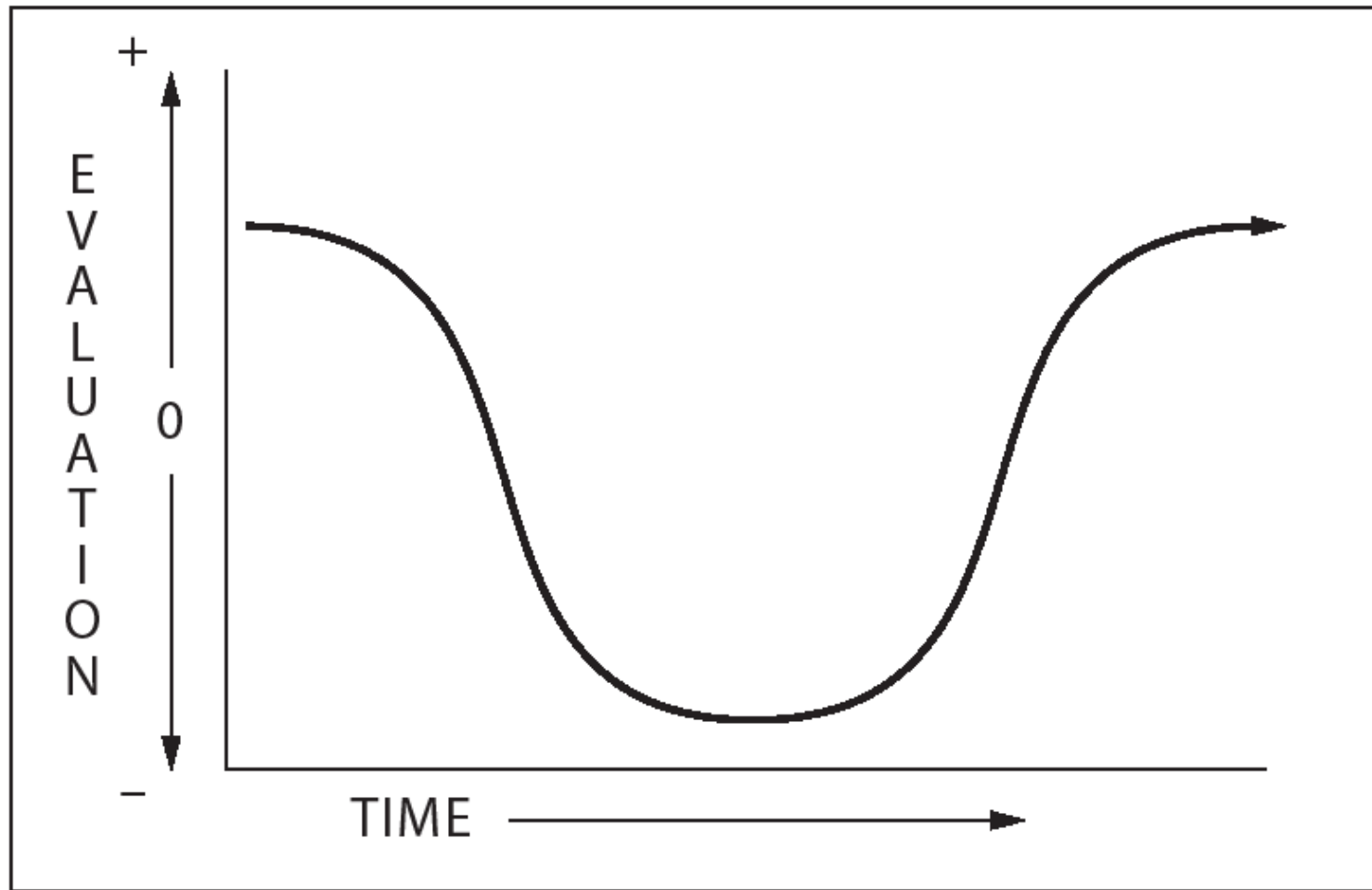


Figure 6.3. Comedy. Source: Gergen 2009: 40.

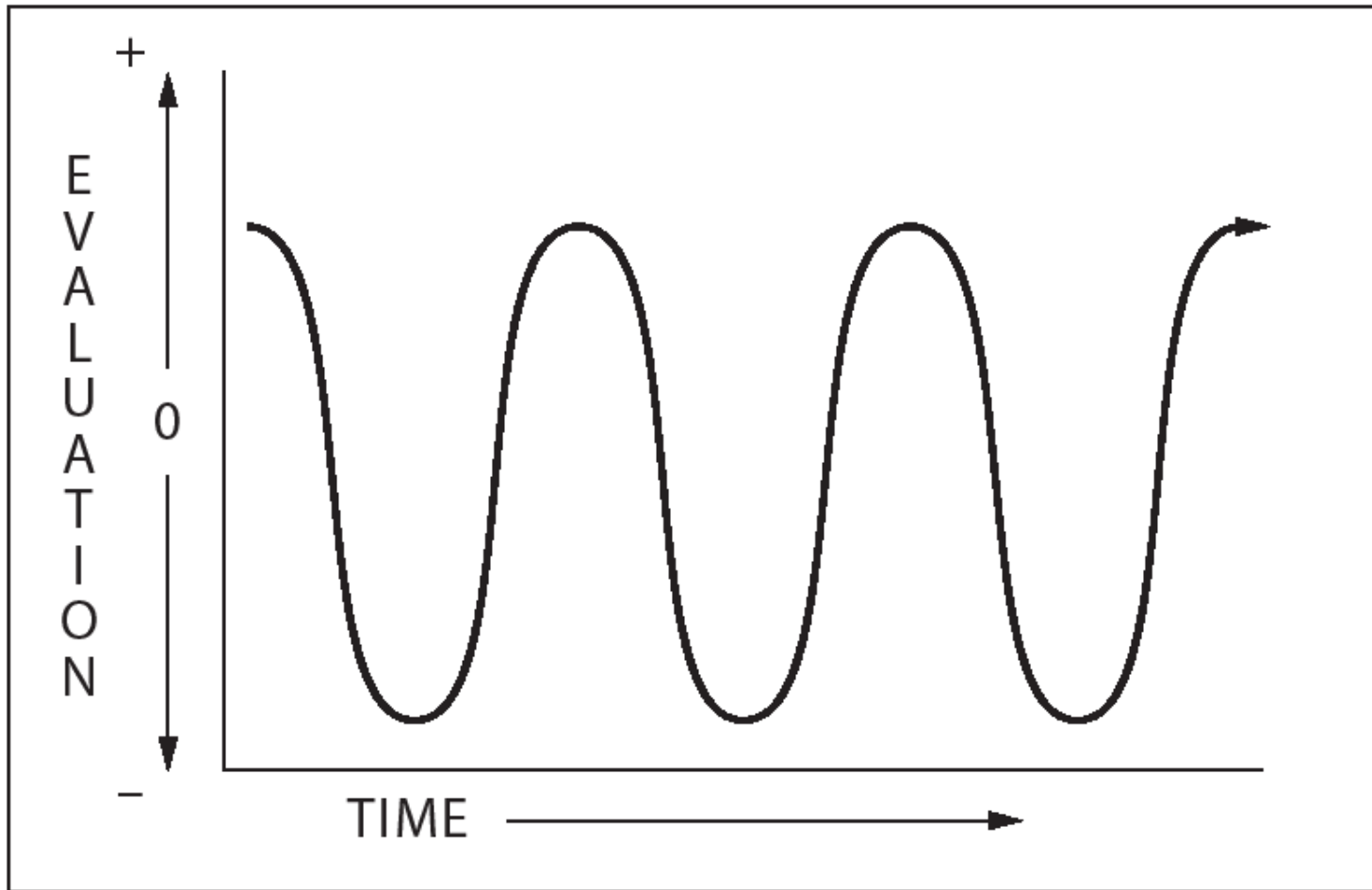


Figure Figure 6.4. Herioc saga. Source: Gergen 2009: 40.



## **Periods of state-creation and Central Asian states of exception**

The state of emergency is the state of exception that according to Carl Schmidt and Giorgio Agamben is the defining characteristic of sovereign power. In other words, the ability to declare and sustain a state of emergency is the main feature of a sovereign. In this study a pattern has emerged that suggests that the periods of state creation in Central Asia were accompanied by states of emergency. The state of emergency is meant to be an exception from the rule, a temporary suspension of normal politics and the constitutional order. However, the practice of declaring and sustaining a state of emergency as the routine mode of government is not uncommon.

Hosni Mubarak ruled over Egypt for thirty years under the declaration of a state of emergency, which has lasted even longer (since the 1967 war with Israel). The Emergency Law was introduced as a temporary measure to deal with a crisis in the country, but has since been institutionalised with the People's Assembly extending it every two to three years. One of the main demands of participants of the popular protests on the Tahrir square that culminated in resignation of President Mubarak on February 11 was an end to the emergency rule. The state of Israel has been in a constant state of emergency since the War of Independence in 1948. The Israeli Knesset extends the state of emergency on a yearly basis. Similarly, Syria has been ruled under a state of emergency since the Baathist coup of 1963. Authoritarian post-colonial states seem to function under a permanent state of emergency.

However, it is not only governments in the Middle Eastern states that use states of emergency to expand the powers of the executive and limit civil liberties and human rights of their subjects. The United States also has been in a continuous limited state of emergency for over thirty years declared by several presidents for various reasons. All states of emergency were declared as a response to the perceived threats to national security. The most prolonged one started with the Iran hostage crisis in 1979 but was extended due to the perceived terrorist threat to the peace process in the Middle East, and again after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. While the government and the constitution on the whole have not been suspended, the executive branch's powers have been substantially expanded and civil liberties curtailed as a result. There is nothing more permanent than the temporary, it seems.

The October revolution in tsarist Russia and the subsequent political upheaval in Turkestan, Bukhara and Khiva, which culminated in the national territorial delimitation of 1924-29 and creation of new states, was the period of emergency politics. The period of the dictatorship of proletariat and civil war was the time when many competing groups contested the right to speak on behalf of 'the people'. This process was constitutive of the new identities that became the basis for creation and continuing existence of state-like entities for groups designated in the process of delimitation as 'Uzbeks' and 'Tajiks'. These designations were not markers of some primordial essential identities, seeking to find self-determination through Soviet nationalities' policies. Rather, Uzbekness and Tajikness emerged as the result of the attempt to determine who the relevant 'people' were under the complex conditions of emergency.

The second period of state creation that was precipitated by the union-wide movement demanding greater 'sovereignty' from the Centre, also culminated in an attempted coup d'état by a group of communist hardliners calling themselves the 'State Emergency Committee' [*Gosudarsvennyiĭ komitet po chrezvychainomu polozheniū*] who tried to prevent the devolution of power to the peripheries and possible shrinking or complete dissolution of the USSR. Ironically, the August 1991 coup only accelerated the dissolution. For Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, this has meant a somewhat unexpected promotion from the status of a union republic to the recognition as independent sovereign states. Out of the multitude of voices speaking on behalf of Tajik and Uzbek people during the perestroika period emerged the authoritative discourse of the Ideology of State Independence in Uzbekistan and the Ideology of National Unity in Tajikistan. Rather than the concrete issues of language and minority rights, environmental issues of the Aral Sea desiccation and political economy problem of cotton monoculture, the governments have successfully depoliticised the dominant discourse of authority by presenting the government as the sole guarantors of the implementation of the goals of the state unproblematically defined as 'stability', 'development', and 'peace'.

Historiographic work of the state-controlled academic institutions was tasked with finding the roots of present statehood in the examples of past state-formations in the

territory of the current state borders (in the case of Uzbekistan) or created by peoples that are imagined as direct genetic ancestors of today's nation (Tajikistan). The dissenting voices within this government-academic discourse are discredited as lacking in authority and basic expertise (the right to speak on the matter) since the issues of ethno-genesis and historiography of statehood are considered the issued that state-authorised scholars only are qualified to comment on. However, the debates regarding the interpretations of history both by state-sponsored and independent analysis, spill into the internet fora and such websites as CentrAsia.ru, Ferghana.ru, and many others become the media for the expression of the competing narratives of selves and others for Central Asians.

This debate is not parochial as international scholars join the discussion and the new academic and ideological idioms are adopted by the Central Asian scholars. Sovietological and constructivist vocabularies have found their way into the debate albeit, it in hybrid forms that seek to discredit the other by pointing out the 'artificiality' and newness of their identity and corresponding statehood, while insisting on own identity's and statehood's indigenous and ancient status. The 'Sovietological' interpretation of the delimitation process as dictated by the *divide et emperal* logic is called upon by local scholars to make revisionist arguments regarding the proper boundaries along which the political entities' should had been drawn.

The methodology of 'discursive encounter' has proved to be reflective of the evolution and subtle changes in discourse that occurs in reaction to the previous discursive move by the interlocutor(s). It is this process of gradual adjustment of discourse that is reflected in mitigating/intensification of arguments, change in predicates, substitution of referential signifiers and implicit assumption of continuous identity of people as a person through different historical periods, that allows Möbian chains of signifiers to be completed thus concealing the absence of the master-signified. In this study I systematically deconstructed each of the component elements within the chain of signifiers constituting the ideas of state in post-Soviet Central Asian states of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Chapters One to Five reveal destabilising effects that designations of 'Tajik' and 'Uzbek' have on one another, which is reflected in historiographic practices and the perceptions regarding what constitutes the rightful national 'homeland'. Tajik

nationalism can be described as 'external-territory-seeking', while Uzbekistan adheres to the 'sovereignty-protecting' state model within Lowel W. Barrington's classification of post-colonial nationalisms' types (Barrington 2006: 16-25). However, there do not exist objectively existing coherent groups that inevitably seek self-determination within the territory of a concrete 'homeland'. There are, however, individual people that imagine themselves to be a part of a collective person, that come to impersonate and embody 'the nation', 'the state', or 'the people'.

Each of the signs in the diagram above is itself unstable: its meaning based on binary pairs of conceptual opposites which necessarily exclude the empirical and conceptual ambiguity and that defer their meaning to the next signifier within the chain. Thus the encounter with the master signifier is constantly discursively delayed, thereby hiding the absence or profound ambiguity of a master signifier.

The research project presented in this dissertation of course has its limitations. Although the aim is to present non-Western accounts of ideas on sovereignty, statehood and independence more sympathetically, to draw the picture of the 'view from inside', this study still in large part suffers from the exclusion of 'subaltern voices'. The elite discourse lent itself to the analysis within the scope of this dissertation due to the higher degree of textual articulation. Further research that looks into popular perceptions of the issues discussed in this dissertation would be needed, that through ethnographic fieldwork, collection of folklore, personal oral histories and group narratives explores the issues of how state is made to work from day to day in Central Asia.

### **Roghun as an ongoing case**

The case of the Roghun controversy is still an ongoing one. As such, it is a dynamic element of this thesis's narrative of the state-creation process in Central Asia. At the moment of writing of this concluding chapter, the construction of Roghun HPP is continuing and Uzbek government continues to insist that independent international environmental and safety assessments of the project are undertaken. While the discursive encounter analysis presented in this work helps us better understand the

rhetorical devices and strategies behind the constructions of images of self and other, the motivations behind the arguments advanced by each side and the perceived stakes for each side, it is not possible (and is not the desire of the author) within this analytical framework, to make predictions regarding the course of future interactions and whether the discursive clashes are likely to transform into armed confrontation. Neither was it within the ambition of this thesis to make policy recommendations to the politicians. I would like however, to schematically place this case within the broader context of global politics and the related discursive formations. As we saw in Table 7.3, periods of state emergence coincide with the states of emergency. The first period of state emergence in Central Asia (1920-30s) took place against the background of a great revolution and a civil war. Similarly, the second period of state emergence in 1990s was accompanied the states of emergency caused by the civil conflict in Tajikistan that led to securitization of politics in neighbouring Uzbekistan. 'Discourses of danger' that depicted any political conflict as inevitably leading to violence and state breakdown have allowed both Uzbek and post-conflict Tajik governments to justify curtailment of democracy and civic rights of the citizens and to consolidate authoritarian regimes.

The second decade of independence in Central Asia has seen a different type of state of emergency as the state-making condition. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the political and academic imaginings of the region became primarily associated with the military campaign in Afghanistan. The United States' 'war on terror' set the new trend of seeing the region as part of South Asia and the greater Middle East, rather than as primarily a 'post-communist' or 'post-socialist' state. This process has found its reflection in the classificatory practices of such institutions as the US State Department and the Department of Defense.

This global trend found resonance among Central Asian scholars and politicians as well, that have also partaken in the discourse of the 'new Great Game' that designated the region as the 'pivot' of history and the 'heartland' of the battles for world domination among the great powers. In case of Uzbekistan, for example, the Great Game narrative is employed when constructing post-colonial 'discourses of danger' portraying the great powers as striving to dominate the region. Thus, the wave of the 'Coloured revolutions' in the post-Soviet space were interpreted by Uzbek leadership as an ideological attack by unnamed outside forces. In the wake of the events in Andijon in May of 2005, where hundreds of people died allegedly as a result of government indiscriminate shooting of

civilian protesters, Uzbek government articulated a 'discourse of danger' that linked the threat of Islamic terrorism and extremism to the 'Coloured revolutions' promoted by the hegemonic 'West' in the strategic interests of the 'new Great Game' (Suyarkulova 2006).

Thus, one observes the securitisation of politics in Central Asia. A securitisation process that by definition calls for suspension of normal politics in the interests of existential survival in the face of the perceived threats is a form of emergency politics. The second decade of independence in Central Asia is thus characterized by this new type of constant state of emergency that is sustained by the condition of the 'war on terror' and the 'discourses of danger' set against the background of the geopolitical vision of the region as the 'heartland' of Eurasia.

The Roghun case is illustrative of geopolitical thinking of the elites that perceive state sovereignty to be under threat posed by outside forces. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan seeks to assert their economic, energy and political sovereignty through their interactions with one another. The state of permanent emergency is continued by securitization of the use of regional water resources as reflected in the case of Roghun controversy, whereby each side perceived it as a matter of state sovereignty and even survival rather than a set of technical solutions aimed at a pragmatic resolution of a concrete problem

**Table 6.2: State-creation periods and the state of exception within dialogical sovereignty articulation process**

<b>State-creation period</b>	<b>Key events</b>	<b>Discursive encounter</b>	<b>Dominant narrative</b>	<b>State of exception</b>
1920-1930s  Creation of Soviet Central Asian republics	The Great October Revolution 1917 National territorial delimitation of Central Asia (1924-36) Civil war ( <i>Basmachi</i> movement) <i>Hujum</i>	Anthropology Ethnography Linguistics  Identifying the in-groups and the out-groups and establishing the connection between ethnicity and territoriality	Liberation, self-determination and modernisation	Delimitation as a 'work in progress'/toporny razdel  Revolutionary suspension of normal politics (dictatorship of proletariat) as a result of the redefinition of 'the people' as the proletariat (in Central Asia 'Muslim Soviets'/national-communists)
1980-1990s  Sovereignisation process and independence	The Cotton Affair Perestroika and glasnost' National civic pro-reform movements Violence in Almaty, Ferghana, Osh, Dushanbe August Coup 1991 Belovezhskaia pushcha agreement and dissolution of USSR Independence Protests and civil war in Tajikistan Uzbekistan's intervention in Tajik civil war 1998 explosions in Uzbekistan (IMU)	Historiography  Grounding claims for sovereignty and independence in the past examples of 'statehood' based on either ethnic or territorial logic	Ideology of National Independence/Unity (statehood as a normative value)  Discourses of danger (external and internal other)	State of emergency introduced during ethnic violence episodes, during the August coup 1991, before and during the Tajik civil war. In Uzbekistan the 'state of emergency' is not allowed but authoritarianism is justified as necessary to prevent 'Afghanisation'/'Tajik scenario'





## **Appendix A**

### **Methodological notes**

#### ***Textual selection***

This thesis identified two case studies (or discursive encounters) which are representative of dialogical narrative identity articulation along the temporal (historiography) and spatial (geopolitics of water use) dimensions. A wide range of sources was consulted and included secondary and primary sources produced in English, Russian, Uzbek and Tajik. The reading was guided by selection of sources based on the authority of the writers and institutions that produced the texts, how often those texts were cited by others (both implicitly and explicitly). I also asked the people who I interviewed to recommend readings on the subject.<sup>1</sup> Some sources were given to me by the interviewees. Others were found in the National Library of Uzbekistan and the Library of the Academy of Sciences (Tashkent) and the National Library of Tajikistan (Dushanbe), as well as the Lehman Library of the Columbia University (New York). Internet-based research through databases and search engines as well as a number of the most common Central Asian websites was very important in the textual selection process for the purposes of discourse analysis in this thesis.

Below is the textual selection matrix for this research based on the criteria proposed by Lena with some modifications to include the spatial dimension of the research design for this study (Hansen 2006: 83):

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<sup>1</sup> Some interviews were conducted with academics and policy makers in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in summer 2008. I decided, however, not to treat interviews as a primary data source. Some of the reasons for doing so are discussed in this appendix.

## Textual selection matrix: primary sources

Temporal location				
	Time of study (1991-2010)		Historical material	
<b>General material</b>	Three criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear articulations of identity/difference</li> <li>• Widely read and attended to</li> <li>• Formal authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Books by the presidents Rahmon(ov) and Karimov, their statements and interviews</li> <li>• Official speeches, documents, websites of the ministries and government news agencies' reports, university manuals, academic works</li> <li>• National laws and international legal documents (constitutions, treaties, agreements, etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptual histories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genealogies of sovereignty</li> <li>• Soviet concept of "limited sovereignty", national self-determination and Brezhnev Doctrine</li> <li>• Soviet nationalities policies</li> </ul>
<b>Key texts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary reading of broader set of sources</li> <li>• Digital search engines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selected texts by Karimov, Rahmon(ov)</li> <li>• Newspapers, news websites, blogs</li> <li>• NGOs' and IOs' reports</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptual histories</li> <li>• Quoted in contemporary debates</li> <li>• Republished</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stalin's concept of nations/nationality</li> <li>• "The Tajiks" by G'ofurov and "History of Crude Division" by Masov, history polemics</li> </ul>
Spatial dimension				
<b>General material</b>	Three criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear articulations of identity/difference</li> <li>• Widely read and attended to</li> <li>• Formal authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Books by the presidents Rahmon(ov) and Karimov, their statements and interviews</li> <li>• Official speeches, documents, websites of the ministries and government news agencies' reports, university manuals, academic works</li> <li>• National laws and international legal documents (constitutions, treaties, agreements, etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptual histories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mackinher's <i>Geographical Pivot of History</i></li> <li>• Bzezinski's <i>Grand Chessboard</i></li> <li>• Lev Gumilyov's <i>Passionarnaya teoriya etnogeneza</i></li> <li>• Soviet discourse on <i>hydraulic mission</i></li> <li>• Late soviet nationalistic environmentalist discourse</li> </ul>

<b>Key texts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary reading of broader set of sources</li> <li>• Digital search engines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Karimov, Rahmon(ov)</li> <li>• Newspapers, news websites, blogs</li> <li>• NGOs' and IOs' reports</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptual histories</li> <li>• Quoted in contemporary debates</li> <li>• Republished</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional scholar's works on geopolitics and hydropolitics</li> </ul>
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## **Auto-ethnography: Telling the Othered Story of the Self**

### ***Making my own voice heard***

Many authors have recently commented on the exorcism of personal human voice from writing in IR (Doty 2004, Brigg and Bleiker 2010, Neumann 2010, Lowenheim 2010). The named authors object to the writing practices that create an illusion of objectivity by distancing the author from the observed objects of enquiry, thus implicitly conveying the image of a sovereign omniscient, infallible, godlike narrator devoid of human passions. Carol Cohn in her study on the use of 'techno-strategic' discourse within nuclear policy circles commented that the language which is "abstract, sanitised, full of euphemisms ... makes it possible to be radically removed from the reality of what one is talking about" (Cohn 1987: 24). Similarly, Lowenheim (2010) reflects on the ability of the discourse prevalent in the IR writing to dehumanise and sanitise the discussions of war, shifting attention from human suffering to the behaviour of states as the main referents (1039). There have been calls therefore to introduce the authorial voice explicitly into the IR writing to replace the superhuman sovereign author.

Such an authorial move is justified as (1) a means of gaining insights into the international through individual experiences of the author; (2) a means of disclosure of authorial decisions on the choice of the subject matter, arrival at the theoretical framework and methodological tools; (3) a means of reflecting on how the international has affected the author as an individual and how those effects influenced his work as an IR scholar, a teacher and a political activist; (4) as a stylistic decision aimed at evoking reader's emotions, empathy and reminding of the common humanity of the reader and the author; (5) and finally, as a means of resistance to the dominant disciplinary practices (Lowenheim 2010, Brigg and Bleiker 2010, Dauphinee 2010).

I, too, felt the need to talk of my personal experience in this dissertation in order to make the process of research more transparent and not to hide behind the sovereign self of the author. The erasure of the back-and-forth process of my personal narrative identity articulation and my theorising of sovereignty would be an act of dishonesty. The process of writing this dissertation therefore was in part a sense-making exercise for me. My authorial voice helps to separate the subject of the analysis (other authors' accounts) from my reflection on these voices. Also this ties in with the postcolonial literature (Spivak et al.) and its demand to make the voices of the subaltern heard. As a scholar of Central Asia, being from the region, I have always felt the need to explain my motivation for making a career out of the accident of my birthplace. It might appear parochial or even nationalistic to choose the region you are from as the object of one's intellectual pursuits. I think that, apart from a selfish sense-making narrative exercise my interest in the study of Central Asian politics has grown with frustration with some of the prevailing existing accounts of the region that I read as a student at the American University of Central Asia. Through the eyes of the outside observers places that were familiar to me from my childhood became unrecognisable. Such incongruence of lived experience and theoretisation found in the literature motivated me to theorise on the international relations of Central Asia.

To some extent my research question in this thesis was driven by personal experience of 'being there', and growing up in a family, which was very involved in politics of the transition period. When in 1993 my mother decided to take me and my brother to Bukhara most of the rest of the extended family remained in Dushanbe, where they lived through the civil war and the post-war reconstruction years. One of my extended family members, Otahon Latifi, was involved in the peace process on the side of the United Tajik Opposition. He was assassinated on September 22, 1998 – a year after the peace accord was signed. In what follows I discuss the roots of my research question and how theoretical issues of nationality, ethnicity, immigration and sovereignty found expression in my lived experiences of 'being there'.

*Belle of Shiraz, grant me but love's demand,  
And for your mole- that clinging grain of sand  
Upon a cheek of pearl – Hafiz would give  
All of Bokhara, all of Samarkand ...*

Growing up, Bukhara was a place not far removed from my imagination. After all, we had family there. It was where my maternal grandparents came from as young people to study medicine in Dushanbe. We were identified as *Bukhori* in Dushanbe. When I was nine or ten through a conversation with my adopted sister (who together with her brother came to live with us in Dushanbe from Tashkent) that I realised for the first time that Bukhara was in another country, Uzbekistan, hopelessly removed from my world, not belonging to me. It came as a shock, since in my imagination Bukhara and Samarkand were part of the magic world of Persian culture, depicted in the fairy-tale films like the *Tales of Shahrezada*, where the above lines by Hafiz Shirazi were quoted. But like for Shirazi, Bukhara and Samarkand were never mine to give away, yet I felt loss and resentment.

My first understanding that Uzbek and Tajik stand in irreconcilable antagonism came from within the family. Unfortunately, one of my maternal uncles once removed is a Tajik supremacist. For him, Uzbeks are barbarians who stole Tajik cities, usurped Tajik culture and history. Later, I read the book by Rahim Masov, *History of Crude Division* (1991). The book was an expose of the inconsistent implementation of the Soviet nationalities policy in Central Asia and the unjust division of territories during the national territorial delimitation in the 1920s, as a result of which Samarkand and Bukhara were included in the territory of Uzbek SSR. Reading that book was at once a revelation and a poisoning experience. The book's message in a few words can be summarised as "Uzbeks are to blame for everything". It was only years later -- when my mother, brother and I escaped the war-torn Tajikistan and found a new home, first in the home-town of my maternal grandparents, Bukhara and later in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent -- that I started realising that those emotions were based on a limited understanding of Central Asian cultures, that assigned people unchangeable genetic differences, based on assumptions of one group's cultural and racial superiority.

The first realisation that Samarkandi and Bukhari culture was neither Uzbek nor Tajik came from conversations with my maternal great grandmother *bibi kalon*, or Bibijon as we called her. She lived most of her long life in Bukhara. Born in 1912, she spoke Tajik as all Bukhori city-dwellers, gave Arabic (Quran reading) lessons to children in the neighbourhood and performed the duties of *otin-oyi* (a female religious leader) in the community. She spoke to us, children, in Russian, however, since we grew up going to

Russian-language medium kindergarten and then Russian school in Dushanbe. When my mom asked Bibijon whether she considered herself Tajik or Uzbek, great grandma responded: “Man uzbechkaman, bachem” [I’m Uzbek, my child]. This instantly became a catchphrase in the family, because, within one sentence, not only different languages were combined, but the absurdity of having a grandma, who spoke Tajik yet considered herself Uzbek, while her son and his children were recorded and considered themselves Tajik was captured perfectly.

However, as it turned out later from conversations with my mother, not everything was straightforward in the matter of the recorded ethnicity of my family. My maternal grandfather was recorded (as his mother, Bibijon) Uzbek, because he loved Tashkent and all his life hoped to persuade my grandma to move there. His wife, my grandma, the first female professor of paediatrics in Tajikistan, who only saw her future life and career in Tajikistan, was recorded Tajik. Apparently in her family all boys were recorded Uzbek and all girls Tajik. Accordingly, my mother, the older daughter, was recorded as her father Uzbek, but her younger sister was registered with the state as Tajik. My grandfather’s dream of moving to Tashkent was not to come true until much later in his life, and then it was due to unfortunate circumstances. At some point it was decided that their lives would be connected to Tajikistan and granddad became Tajik as did my mother. During the *perestroika* years, when it was first allowed to change family names from Russified forms into the traditional ones, my aunt got rid of the ‘-ova’ ending and added ‘-zade’ to the root of the family name. Everyone else in the family kept the old last name.

At a very young age I became a witness to a number of important historical events. I remember the fear of the first days of the August putsch in 1991 and the elation following that when the statue of the ‘Iron Felix’, Felix Dzerzhinskii, the founder of NKVD (the Soviet internal security service) signalled the fall of the USSR. Soon I personally witnessed the demolition of the stature of Lenin in Dushanbe. Verdery (1999) writes that statues, are sacred representations of the ‘dead bodies’ cast in stone and as such their ‘political lives’ mark historical watersheds. The toppling of statues (especially of those of the once powerful and famous dead) has become the standard iconography for the dramatic political change. The ‘deportations’ of statues in the post-Soviet countries since 1989 can be analysed in terms of the ‘politics of the dead bodies’

(Verdery 1999), whereby the statues (as well as corpses) are moved and replaced as a part of the transition period, when people and states redefine their worlds of meanings and seek new sources of legitimacy. Both tearing down of the old statues and erecting new ones signify the changes in the dominant culture that existed under the Soviet Union; it means de-sacralisation of the previously powerful signifiers of authority, identity and memory and (re)sacralisation of the “dead bodies” that symbolise identities and values hitherto excluded from the prevailing narratives (Verdery 1999: 5). The act of removing a statue reorganises the public space and ideas of time, it excises a certain figure not only from the landscape, but also from the past.

Amid opposition protests and demands for the resignation of the republic’s communist leadership, crowds gathered on one of the main squares of Dushanbe in September 1991. Unlike the violent outburst of public discontent that happened in February 1990, these demonstrations were well-organised and had a clear political agenda of removing the leadership implicated by their life-long involvement in the Communist Party structure and compromised by their tacit support of the August coup.

President Mahkamov eventually had to resign under the pressure from the opposition groups (Rastokhez, the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, the Islamic Renaissance Party and La’li Badakhshon). On the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1990, Davlat Khudonazarov, a famous film director and then a people’s deputy of the USSR’s Supreme Council, accused the leadership of Tajikistan of involvement in the putsch reading out several coded telegrammes which were received by the Tajik Communist Party (CP) apparatus from the State Committee of Emergency Situations (Nazriev & Sattorov 2002: 17). Otahon Latifi, accused Mahkamov personally of involvement in the events of 19-21 August, saying that there was an audio recording to prove that (Nazriev & Sattorov: 21). Having thus been completely discredited, Mahkamov announced his resignation on August 30. The Appeal of the Extraordinary Session of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Tajikistan to the Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR and to the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR issued on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1991 condemned the coup (rather belatedly) and called for resignation of Kahhor Mahkamov, who failed to react promptly and seemed to have supported the putsch. The democratic forces in Tajikistan gained high moral ground over the conservative CP after the August coup failed in Moscow. The Supreme Soviet passed a resolution that banned the Communist Party and seized all its

assets. The same resolution ordered the removal of the statue of Lenin in the main square.

I remember my brother, his friends and I watched the process of the removal, snacking on tasty pumpkin pastries that my mom made that day. We lived not far from the central square so could observe the end of the long process of demolition. Although this was simply the implementation of the resolution adopted on the wave of elation after the failure of the coup, it was still perceived as sacrilege by many, who grew up loving the image of Lenin as almost a saint, a person with no fault and of incredible genius as he was depicted in the Soviet iconography. Yurchak writes that Lenin performed the function of the master-signifier in the Soviet authoritative discourse (Yurchak 2006: 15). It is therefore not surprising that the desecration of his statue was called 'an act of vandalism' by the communist forces and the Higher Council (Parliament) of Tajikistan declared a state of emergency, rescinding the ban on the Communist Party and prohibiting the opposition's demonstrations. Aslonov, the acting head of government, who ordered the demolition had to resign over the matter, saying that threats had been made against him and his family (Schoeberlein 1994: 29). It was later ruled for the statue to be re-erected; those who dismantled it were to be forced to pay the costs.<sup>2</sup> The state of emergency, therefore, was the Communist Party's way of claiming the sovereign power. The symbolic power of the Lenin's 'dead body' served as the justification for the suspension of politics.

When the Tajik civil war started I was eleven. We lived in the centre of Dushanbe and my brother and I went to School №1 located opposite from the House of Press building in which my mother worked for the daily newspaper. Shortly before the 'events' my mother started a cooperative with a group of fellow journalists publishing two newspapers. She was involved in the presidential campaign supporting the opposition candidate a Pamiri film director Davlat Khudonazarov. This was probably the period of

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<sup>2</sup> Due to events that followed, Lenin's statue was never re-erected. Instead, the statue of Firdausi was raised up in the square, which was later replaced by the towering figure of Ismoil Samoni, "the founder of the first Tajik state". In Uzbekistan, the statue of Lenin on the main square of the capital was replaced in 1991 by a temporary (as it was initially envisaged) Monument of Independence, a rather abstract representation of the new state's emergence on the global map; while the statue of Karl Marx in the nearby park was replaced by a horseback statue of Amir Temur (Tamerlane), a historical figure, whose significance for the new Uzbek state has been reinterpreted to become the central symbol of a strong ruler and a founder of a powerful state.



the highest hopes for democratisation of Tajikistan. The atmosphere on the square where the opposition demonstrations took place was uplifted, with the icons of Tajik culture, poets like Gulruhsor Sofieva and Bozor Sobir reading poetry, the crowd singing a beautiful revolutionary song in Tajik calling the people to rise up (I still remember the refrain “Hezeraton, hezeraton, hezeraton, hez!”, and the chanting of the crowd “Ozodi! Iste’fo!” [Freedom! Resignation!]). My mom would take us to the demonstration to listen to the speeches, observe and interview people. We took a camper bed and some blankets to donate to the protesters. I remember reading an article my mother wrote for an opposition newspaper called *Adolat* (Justice). The most memorable part of the article for me was my mother questioning the rhetoric of the government, saying that ‘the people’ were against the protests. “Aren’t these ‘the people’ too?” asked my mother in her article, meaning the crowds on the square. This was probably my first realisation of how important the definition of ‘the people’ is in politics.

The presidential elections in November 24, 1991 were, however, lost by the opposition and the conservative candidate, Nabiev became the first president of independent Tajikistan. The opposition alleged election irregularities and in March 1992, the anti-government demonstrations calling for parliamentary elections resumed, despite the ban on protests and restrictions on the freedom of press introduced by the new government earlier. The government orchestrated a rival demonstration in the nearby central square, literally several hundred meters away from the opposition protests. The ‘administrative resource’ was used to bus people into Dushanbe from Kulob. After almost two months of demonstrations, Nabiev made the fateful decision that ultimately triggered the civil war. Using his emergency powers, given to him by the parliament three days prior, he created a ‘Presidential Guard’ from among the Kulobi supporters on the square and distributed weapons to them on May 2, 1992. The next day, Safarali Kenjaev, whose resignation the opposition passionately demanded, was restored as chairman of the Supreme Soviet signalling to the opposition that there will be no more negotiations or compromises. In a desperate move, the opposition tried to capture the president and the next day they took over the television broadcasting. I remember that from then on the change of power was indicated by who was talking at us from the TV screens. As my mother put it, “the journalists undertook the revolution, where the politicians failed”. Journalists have often been blamed since for fermenting the passions

and ultimately causing the bloodshed of the civil war (Panfilov 2003). The importance of journalism was great indeed, but to claim that journalists were the sole instigators of violence is a statement loaded with implications prohibiting free speech in societies where supposedly 'ethnic hatreds' lie dormant until the magic power of a written word raises them from their slumber.

Gradually, normal life faded away. The city was under a state of emergency with curfews imposed after 5pm. At nights, and then later during the days as well, we would hear shooting on the streets. During the siege of Dushanbe, there was constant shooting just outside our windows, there were even snipers on the roofs of the nearby buildings. Because we lived in the city centre, the cityscape became the terrain for military operations. My school was converted into a hospital. There were bullets lodged into the wall on our veranda just above the fridge, now empty because there was no food in town. The food supplies could not reach the city as the railroad was destroyed and the city was under siege. Soon you could not buy milk any more. We had to get up at 4am and walk in the dark to join the endless lines outside the bread factory. Sometimes, however, the gates would not open at nine, or ten or even eleven in the morning. We learned to make 'cake' out of stale bread croutons [*sukhari* in Russian].

We learned to blackout our windows, to crawl on the floor between the rooms during the heavy shooting periods. We would all congregate in the only tiny room which was protected by two walls on each side – all of the neighbours on the floors. We learned to distinguish the sounds of different weapons and even children knew the names of the various war-machines. During the periods of calm, my mother and brother would go looking for food and I would be left in the apartment and instructed to barricade the door from the inside and tell the people who asked which region we were from that we were Bukhori.

Somehow this conflict turned from an ideological one into hunting down and exterminating people from certain localities, assuming their loyalty to one political group or another from the stamp in their passports or their accents. During this period when over 50,000 people died and hundreds of thousands displaced, the pro-Communist forces became identified as Kulobi (lead by the Popular front with former convict and murderer Sangak Safarov) as well as 'Uzbeks' (including Turkic-speaking Central Asian

'Arabs', Loqais, and Qarluqs) from Qurghonteppa and Tursunzade/Hissor regions; while the opposite side were mainly people from the Pamir (Badakhshan), Karategin and Gharm (Shoeberlein 1994: 39). Both sides committed horrendous crimes as the vicious circle of blood spilt and blood avenged continued between 1992 and 1993. This experience is in large part responsible for my interest in politics and IR. I went into the study of IR to make sense of why wars happen and to 'master my fear of war' (Lowenheim 2010: 1038).

We missed a year of school. My mother lost the source of her income. Journalists were being killed and blamed for starting the civil war. So she decided to take us to Bukhara, to bibijon, to normal life where we would not live in want for bread anymore and could go to school. By the end of February 1993 relative quiet returned. We took a train to Bukhara using a short window of opportunity. Although our relatives stayed hoping for normalisation of life, my mother's reasoning was: "Look at Afghanistan, they have been at war with one another for over a century now"... I did not go back to Dushanbe until my doctoral fieldwork in the summer of 2008, fifteen years later.

### ***Doing fieldwork 'at home'***

Most fieldwork is conducted by Western scholars in 'exotic' and 'foreign' places. As someone who has spent first ten years of my life in Tajikistan and the following years between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, the United States and finally Scotland, going to 'field' was a return 'home'. It was going home to Tashkent, where my immediate family resided and whom I had not seen for two years prior to the trip; and it was also going back home to Dushanbe, where I was born and grew up and where most of my extended family lives. Yet, the experience of doing fieldwork at 'home' was ambivalent as my double-absence from 'homeland' made me a stranger in many respects. My prolonged periods of studying abroad have removed and distanced me from the native culture and society. As a result, despite the relative advantages of having family and other connections to the site of fieldwork, there were certain emotional, cultural and logistical challenges associated with conducting fieldwork 'at home'. Some of these challenges appear to be common to people doing research on their native societies and others

could well be idiosyncratic to my particular case. In what follows I am going to analyse my initial expectations of what the fieldwork would be before I went there and the actual lived experience.

Planning the fieldtrip to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, I wrote a note on research methods and organisation of the fieldwork.

### **Fieldwork in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and Dushanbe, Tajikistan (June –Sept 2008)**

The fieldwork this summer will consist of two methods of data collection: 1) collection of textual and visual data (books, pamphlets, periodicals, policy documents, legal documents, photos, maps), and 2) interviewing of relevant people in policy circles, academia, mass media, etc. Interviewing part of the field work does not seek to cover a representative sample of respondents. Rather, the interviews are intended to be a guide for other means of data collection as well complementary source of primary data, rather than the main means of data collection. When using interviews as data for discourse analysis one should remember its performative nature, whereby both the interviewer and the interviewee are concerned with performing their roles as an authoritative professional and/or a responsible respondent. Interview data, therefore, will be used cautiously, bearing in mind the ‘artificiality’ of interview setting and roles performed by both parties.

### **Theoretical and snow-ball sampling**

This field work will utilise two types of sampling of the participants/interviewees. Firstly, *theoretical sampling*, whereby the selection of participants will be driven by research findings as they develop, will be used. I will simultaneously collect and analyse data and constantly compare data and its possible meanings by using the developing analysis to decide what data to collect next and from where to get that data. Secondly, *snow-ball sampling* will be used in combination with the theoretical, whereby each interviewee will be asked to

refer me to one or more people to interview. This allows to build on the social networks of the interviewees as well as diversify the sample through combining snowballing with theoretical sampling.

### **In-depth unstructured interviews**

In-depth unstructured interviews will be used as a qualitative technique for gathering rich, detailed accounts of the interviewees' opinions, ideas and experiences. I will not use a structured list of pre-prepared questions in a questionnaire format. Instead I will use a topic guide, such as a list of themes or questions relevant to the research. In this way, in-depth interviewing can provide detailed information and insights about people's thoughts on the subject that cannot be accessed through rigidly structured questionnaires. This will be used in conjunction with other research methods as a means of supplying additional or supporting data.

The interviews will be recorded through a combination of audio (Digital Dictaphone) recording and note-taking in order to avoid data loss due to technical issues. Where permission is not granted for audio recording, the reporting of the interview will be based solely on the interview form.

The interview form consists of three parts: the factsheet, the topic guide and the post-interview comments sheet. The factsheet is used to record factual information such as time, date, and place of the interview. Also, any special conditions or circumstances that may affect the interview are recorded. Demographic information about the interviewee is noted on the factsheet as well. The actual interview questions, probing questions or statements, and anticipated follow-up questions comprise the second part of the interview guide. A column alongside the questions is used for observations made during questioning. The final part of the interview guide provides a place to write notes after the interview that detailing my feelings, interpretations, and other comments. After the interview I will provide the interviewee with my contact details in case they have some follow up comments, thoughts or questions.

### **Ethical concerns**

Informed consent will be sought by explaining the nature of the research before the interview. No signature of a consent form will be sought, as people in Central Asia are reluctant to sign any papers that could implicate them afterwards. No names will be recorded and the interviewees will be informed of the anonymisation procedures.

The main ethical concern is the safety of the interviewees. I will make sure that the location of the interview is safe and the interviewee feels comfortable talking there.

The actual experience of fieldwork turned out to be rather different in regards to some of the initial expectations that I had. Doing fieldwork in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan was rather challenging in several regards. First of all, I had to get a visa to travel to Tajikistan from Uzbekistan. At the time I was still a 'person without citizenship' and was applying for Russian citizenship through the Embassy in Tashkent. So there was the matter of limited time and having to submit to various bureaucratic institutions at certain times during that summer. When I was studying for the MLitt degree at St Andrews, my family's Uzbek citizenship was revoked as a result of a curious and Kafkaesque bureaucratic mistakes, misinterpretation, and misapplication of citizenship law in Uzbekistan. We therefore became 'people without citizenship' with a curious document in a grey cover – people which are neither here nor there, neither insiders nor outsiders.

We became stateless due to the quirks in citizenship law. Neither Tajikistan nor Uzbekistan recognised us as their citizens as we were not yet in Uzbekistan at the moment of adoption of the law in 1992 and already out of Tajikistan at the time when they adopted theirs. We lived in a permanent 'state of exception', as *homo sacer* embodying this 'inclusive exclusion', constituting the border of the new nation-state that refused to accept us as its citizens (Agamben 1998: 17). We were not included in the independent Uzbekistan's definition of 'the people'. So while doing my PhD research I went from being a Uzbek citizen to a person not recognised by any state as their national to being a Russian citizen through the naturalisation programme of 'the return of the compatriots' initiated by the Russian government. This meant inability to travel freely as well as necessity to go through multiple immigration hurdles both to

continue my studies in the UK and to gain necessary documents in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Since there is no air link between the two capitals since 1992, I had to travel by land and then cross the border on foot. My mother was very worried about my safety and the rules of propriety that do not allow a young unmarried woman to travel alone, so my aunt and her son came along on the trip, despite my history of travelling and living abroad alone for five years prior to the trip. Since my aunt had to be back at work after two weeks, I could not stay longer, as originally planned. My relatives in Tajikistan, many of whom had not seen me since I was ten years of age, wanted my time and attention. I stayed at one of my great aunts' house. However, the other great aunt was gravely offended that I did not stay at her place. I had to navigate the hidden stones of old family feuds and sometimes complicated relations rooted in stories that I was not aware of. I had to spend a lot of time visiting relatives rather than at the National library or meeting people. Therefore, my lived experience did not match the perfect image of a competent and independent researcher who autonomously decides on the circumstances, duration and conditions of their stay in the field. I was constrained by a number of factors including migration and documentation regimes, family concerns and rules of propriety for a young unmarried woman.

At the same time, family was an invaluable resource when it came to introducing me to people, finding sources and simply as 'informants'. My great aunt, who is a professor at the National University serves on the committee of the Academy of Sciences introduced me to almost all the people I interviewed in Tajikistan. She was the judge of who was to be trusted and generally worthy of interviewing. The interview dynamic, therefore, did not follow the performance of "a authoritative professional and responsible respondent" roles as I anticipated. Rather, I was cast as a "student in need of guidance" in front of a "respected member of academic/policy circles".

Just like the Malawian anthropologist, Alister Munthali, while doing my fieldwork in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan I felt like 'a foolish person asking silly questions, because I was expected to know the answers' since I came from the same culture (Munthali 2001: 114). While I was trying to make sense of Central Asian politics, was also being judged by people that I met. I was perceived as a young female student in need of guidance, a

potential marriage material for one's male relatives, an outsider and an insider at the same time.

### ***Positionality and objectivity***

Even though I was from the places I was studying I was estranged from 'home' by long absence from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, by my changing nationality status, my bilinguality (English being my professional language) and the choice of career and lifestyle, which all de-familiarised me from the things I was supposed to be familiar with. Since 2002 I have been studying and living abroad, in essence changing me from a local in Uzbekistan into a guest of sorts. Munthali writes that the anthropologies doing research 'at home' can rarely be considered as 'full insiders':

...most native researchers stay away from their homes when they are undergoing training and only return after several years to study their own people. This defamiliarisation ... allows the objective study of one's own culture. During the time he is away the native anthropologist attains a new status, an occupation, a new residence and a new way of thinking which in most cases is radically different from his 'fellow natives' (Munthali 2001: 131).

Immigrant scholars like Edward Said and Shahram Khosravi (2010) report a feeling of homelessness, or a certain feeling of estrangement or 'exile' from both their 'home' and 'recipient' cultures and communities. Khosravi writes that on his return to Iran to attend to his dying father: "I felt that I was both insider and outsider" (2010: 86). He felt that his 'home' was fading away, his long absence making him 'alien in the country of my childhood' (88). This distance and alienation are also reflected in the linguistic inability to express oneself fully in either of the languages, with whole domain vocabularies missing from both (89). I have also felt the same linguistic impotence at times as I have become bilingual during my studies. Edward Said once said on the issue of bilingualism:

Everyone lives life in a given language; everyone's experiences, therefore, are had, absorbed and recalled in that language. The basic split in my life was the one between Arabic, my native language, and English, the language of my education and subsequent expression as a scholar and teacher, and so trying to produce a narrative of one in the language of the other – to say nothing of the numerous ways in which the languages were mixed up for me and crossed over from one realm to the other – has been a complicated one (Said 1999: xi-xii).

I share this sense of never really being able to express myself fully in either Russian or English and that my life experiences can only be ever narrated in some kind of



combination of these two languages. Still, I think this being an 'insider/outsider' gave me a certain sensitivity for the languages which to some extent allowed a more nuanced understanding of the discourses that I analysed in this thesis. Moreover, contrasting the use of language between my first, second, and third language may allow me insights that native speakers without foreign language skills do not have. There are some cultural differences that were reflected in language idiosyncrasies that I could perhaps pick up on better than non-native speakers of the region. But there is also a chance that they remained unarticulated in some instances exactly because I perceived them as natural and common-sensical. Being an insider as well as outsider language-wise gives you a degree of objectivity that cannot be achieved without this particular set of language skills. To some extent also my fading mother tongue has played a role in how the interviewees and I performed during the interviews.

## Appendix B

### Note on transliteration

I used American Libraries Association and Library of Congress (ALA-LC) system of Romanisation for Russian Cyrillic text. For transliteration of Uzbek Cyrillic, I used the latest version of the Romanised Uzbek alphabet. As Tajik script is based on Cyrillic but has some special characters, I used Allworth (1971) system of transliteration, which is straightforward and does not require use of many special symbols. However, Allworth's system for transliteration of Cyrillic-based Tajik text differs from the ALA-LC system for Russian Cyrillic. The original transliterations were preserved when quoting other authors' texts. Proper nouns are spelled according to the accepted English norms (where they exist), unless spelled otherwise in the original quoted text.

Letter	ALA-LC Russian	Allworth (1971) Tajik	Romanised Uzbek
А (а)	A (a)	A (a)	A (a)
Б (б)	B (b)	B (b)	B (b)
В (в)	V (v)	V (v)	V (v)
Г (г)	G (g)	G (g)	G (g)
Ғ (ғ)	-	Gh (gh)	G' (g')
Д (д)	D (d)	D (d)	D (d)
Е (е)	E (e)	Ye- -e-	Ye- -e-
Ё (ё)	Ё (ë)	Yo (yo)	Yo (yo)
Ж (ж)	Zh (zh)	Zh (zh)	J (j)
З (з)	Z (z)	Z (z)	Z (z)
И (и)	I (i)	I (i)	I (i)
Ї (ї)	-	Ī (ī)	--
Й (й)	Ĭ (ï)	Y( y)	Y (y)
Қ (қ)	-	Q (q)	Q (q)

К (к)	K (k)	K (k)	K (k)
Л (л)	L (l)	L (l)	L (l)
М (м)	M (m)	M (m)	M (m)
Н (н)	N (n)	N (n)	N (n)
О (о)	O (o)	O (o)	O (o)
П (п)	P (p)	P (p)	P (p)
Р (р)	R (r)	R (r)	R (r)
С (с)	S (s)	S (s)	S (s)
Т (т)	T (t)	T (t)	T (t)
У (у)	U (u)	U (u)	U (u)
Ў (ў)	-	Ū (ū)	O' (o')
Ф (ф)	F (f)	F (f)	F (f)
Х (х)	Kh (kh)	Kh (kh)	X (x)
Х (х)	-	H (h)	H (h)
Ц (ц)	Ts (ts)	Ts (ts)	S- (-ts-)
Ч (ч)	Ch (ch)	Ch (ch)	Ch (ch)
□ (□)	-	J (j)	-
Ш (ш)	Sh (sh)	Sh (sh)	Sh (sh)
Щ (щ)	Shch (shch)	-	-
Ъ (ъ)	“	“	‘
Ы (ы)	Y (y)	Y (y)	Y (y)
Ь (ь)	‘	-	-
Э (э)	E (e)	E (e)	E (e)
Ю (ю)	Ĭu (iu)	Yu (yu)	Yu (yu)
Я (я)	Ĭa (ia)	Ya (ya)	Ya (ya)

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